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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO  
INSURGENCY**

by

Jared A. Cordell

September 2016

Thesis Advisor:  
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Jessica Piombo  
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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>		<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.			
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> September 2016	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO INSURGENCY		<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Jared A. Cordell			
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A		<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number <u>N/A</u> .			
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>			
<p>Why would an otherwise capable African government permit an insurgency to persist within its borders for an extended period of time while possessing the means to address it? Through a comparative approach, drawing on academic research on Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army and Nigeria and Boko Haram, this thesis seeks to explain why some insurgencies persist for extended periods of time with minimal government intervention. The research suggests that in the case studies analyzed, Uganda and Nigeria have permitted the insurgencies to continue due to the economic and political benefits that they are able to derive from the ongoing conflict. African governments may at times exploit insurgency and internal conflict to meet political objectives. U.S. policy makers should strongly consider this possibility when deciding upon economic and military aid packages to countries involved in ongoing conflict, to avoid inadvertently facilitating ongoing conflict.</p>			
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> insurgency, Lord's Resistance Army, LRA, Uganda, Nigeria, Boko Haram, war economy, ethnic marginalization, counterinsurgency, COIN, African politics		<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 111	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
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**AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO INSURGENCY**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Why would an otherwise capable African government permit an insurgency to persist within its borders for an extended period of time while possessing the means to address it? Through a comparative approach, drawing on academic research on Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army and Nigeria and Boko Haram, this thesis seeks to explain why some insurgencies persist for extended periods of time with minimal government intervention. The research suggests that in the case studies analyzed, Uganda and Nigeria have permitted the insurgencies to continue due to the economic and political benefits that they are able to derive from the ongoing conflict. African governments may at times exploit insurgency and internal conflict to meet political objectives. U.S. policy makers should strongly consider this possibility when deciding upon economic and military aid packages to countries involved in ongoing conflict, to avoid inadvertently facilitating ongoing conflict.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

APC	All Progressive's Congress
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
IDP	internally displaced persons
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JTF	joint task force
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MNJTF	multi-national joint task force
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
UN	United Nations
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
UPDM	Uganda People's Defense Movement

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. DILEMMA OF PERSISTENT INSURGENCIES

Interstate warfare in Africa has been negligible since independence. Nevertheless, during this period, much of Africa has experienced significant violence due to internal conflict. Insurgencies often arise due to a marginalized portion of the population violently seeking redress, in some form, from the government. While no country in Africa enjoys the economic and political stability of the United States or Western Europe, some countries in Africa exhibit significant economic and political strength yet still fall victim to violent insurgencies, which can surprisingly endure for years. Why would an otherwise moderately stable and capable government allow an insurgency to persist within its borders? This thesis addresses this question and demonstrates the rationality in government acting or not acting to suppress an insurgency and extend protection for its people.

### B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT

The United States spent over \$2 billion in 2015 on various security assistance programs in Africa with the goal of protecting U.S. interests.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. government provides money, training, and equipment to supplement the efforts of African nations to improve security within their regions and borders. Beyond U.S. security assistance, a number of African countries are breaking through economic strata into middle-income status, and should seemingly possess the means and will to maintain control, extend governance within their borders, and protect their interests. Despite relative economic prosperity, the largest African economy, Nigeria, is experiencing the most civilian casualties in a warzone anywhere in the world.<sup>2</sup> Security in Africa seems to be a complex issue to address.

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<sup>1</sup> “Africa at a Glance,” Center for International Policy, accessed September 1, 2015, [www.securityassistance.org/africa](http://www.securityassistance.org/africa).

<sup>2</sup> UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013* (Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013), 124.

From an insurgent's perspective, Africa is ideally suited for insurgency and guerrilla warfare. Large under-governed spaces and porous borders provide sanctuary while neopatrimonialism engenders marginalized portions of the population who might support attempts to undermine the government. To counter these threats, an effective government will extend military and police control to enhance security and make strides to extend services and enfranchise marginalized populations. Stated U.S. strategy toward Africa supports these efforts through the four pillars of strengthening democratic institutions, spurring economic growth, advancing peace and security, and promoting opportunity and development.<sup>3</sup> It stands to reason that a capable African country, with the help of U.S. foreign aid programs, should be able to effectively govern and counter an insurgency, thereby ensuring the peace and security of its citizens.

This thesis explains why an otherwise capable government is unable or unwilling to effectively counter the violence inflicted by an insurgent movement by examining two enlightening case studies. Policy makers should seek to understand the circumstances surrounding an affected partner nation's response when deciding where to provide new or continuing security assistance. They should also question whether that support will further U.S. interests and the stated U.S. strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa. Each situation is different and simply prescribing counterinsurgency doctrine may not be effective if a partner government does not also desire a quick end to an ongoing insurgency.

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the persistence of insurgencies, this thesis compares the Nigeria/Boko Haram conflict with the somewhat similar struggle between Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. The literature review surveys pertinent theories about insurgency, counterinsurgency, and government motivations that might enable an insurgency to persist. It also explores ways in which insurgencies persist in countering government pressure. The next section examines various potential government responses to insurgencies in order to place African responses in the proper context.

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<sup>3</sup> White House, The, *Strategy Towards Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012).

## **1. Insurgency Growth and Resourcing**

Insurgency is one term of many that describe the struggle of a non-state actor against the state. Others include guerrilla warfare, low intensity conflict, or small warfare. Some terms that make reference to the practitioner and their tactics include: insurgent, partisan, guerrilla, terrorist, bandit, etc. As Mao Tse-Tung explained, an insurgency grows out of a people's oppression and their inability to countenance further marginalization.<sup>4</sup> From the start, however, an insurgency faces an uphill battle: after studying African insurgencies, Christopher Day and William Reno concluded that rebels have succeeded less than 10% of the time.<sup>5</sup>

The path from general discontent to open rebellion—rebellion that legitimately poses a threat to the state or part of the state—is one that provides many points along the way where a government could effectively intervene. Intervention requires that the state recognize the unrest for what it is, and not discount it as criminal or terrorist acts. The nascent movement enjoys an initial informational advantage over the state.

As the insurgency begins to grow, it demonstrates an ability to inflict damage on the state. In “Things Come Together,” Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordano explain that violence plays a critical role in this initial growth and organization process; the insurgency invariably begins small and weak, and a visible violent act conveys insurgent strength and state weakness. This broadens the insurgency’s ability to recruit and grow.<sup>6</sup> The insurgency may not yet possess much capacity beyond what it has just accomplished, but it sends a message to both the government and potential recruits that a legitimate new threat now exists.

To harness this potential, the insurgency must commit to some form of organization. Che Guevara, Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, and Andrew Scott et al., describe the essential nature of leadership and the types of organizational structure that

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<sup>4</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Praeger, 1961), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher R. Day and William S. Reno, “In Harm’s Way: African Counter-Insurgency and Patronage Politics,” *Civil Wars* 16, no. 2 (2014), 106.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon McCormick and Frank Giordano, “Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerrilla Mobilization,” *Small Wars Journal* 28, no. 2 (2007), 307–308.

can help turn discontent into outright rebellion and violence.<sup>7</sup> While no single structure works for every situation, organization is essential. Guevara advocates a military type structure with organized platoons and officers.<sup>8</sup> The organization must have political and military aims and the ability to recruit, collect and distribute resources, collect and disseminate intelligence and information (or propaganda), and ultimately be able to hold territory and exert control.<sup>9</sup> Different structures have different strengths and weaknesses that a counterinsurgent force can exploit, nevertheless the literature is unanimous in agreeing that such a structure is essential for fostering and continuing an insurgency.<sup>10</sup> The initial steps taken in operating, recruiting, and organizing are significant for determining the insurgency's ability to persist, and in most cases the state will have defeated a movement before it arrives at this point.

Following the initial breakout, an insurgency must leverage its organization and environment to collect resources (people, food, weapons, sanctuary, etc.) in order to bring the fight to the state. The insurgency needs people, and the ability to recruit more people. T. David Mason, Leites and Wolf, and McCormick and Giordano emphasize that as an insurgency extends its control over an area, the people in that area are more likely to go along with it in order to survive. Exerting control and mild coercion grants the insurgency the ability to obtain resources from the population, and sustain its ability to recruit.<sup>11</sup> The literature further emphasizes the insurgents' need for a safe haven. Such an area may often come in the form of sanctuary in a neighboring country (especially in Africa).<sup>12</sup> This sanctuary provides the insurgency with the ability to train, plan, and escape state

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<sup>7</sup> Che Guevara, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1961), 38; Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1970), 52; Andrew M. Scott et al., *Insurgency* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 128.

<sup>8</sup> Guevara, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Connable and Martin Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 80–81; Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 21; Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> T. David Mason, "Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and the Rational Peasant," *Public Choice* 86, no. 1 (1996), 69; Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 49; McCormick and Giordano, *Things Come Together*, 298–300.

<sup>12</sup> Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 43; Seth G. Jones and Patrick B. Johnston, "The Future of Insurgency," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (2013), 11; Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005), 146.

forces, thus greatly prolonging the conflict. Beyond people and place, the insurgency must also have the means to collect other resources; and in the modern context, this necessitates outside support.

In a majority of cases, an insurgency will not be able to meet its needs (the resources necessary to attain its goals) by relying exclusively on internal support. Leites and Wolf and Scott et al. describe this dynamic in the form of inputs and outputs, and outline the structure of the insurgent organization around these categories.<sup>13</sup> Paul Collier goes further and subjugates grievances, rhetoric, and ideology to economic concerns; without resources, the insurgency cannot persist.<sup>14</sup> Quantitative studies by Collier, Ben Connable and Martin Libicki, and Leites and Wolf, and qualitative analysis by Max Boot and Bard O'Neill all point to the centrality of resource collection and the substantial increase in the likelihood of insurgent success when there is outside support.<sup>15</sup> Seth Jones and Patrick Johnston also note that insurgencies with outside support endure on average three years longer, and increase their chance of success by 25%.<sup>16</sup> The converse is also highlighted; when the sponsored insurgency becomes dependent on outside support, withdrawal of support often leads to the collapse of the insurgency.<sup>17</sup> An insurgency that has succeeded in organizing, recruiting, and resourcing in the face of state power proves its ability to gain a foothold against the state to advance its goals, and persist.

If it should reach this point, an uprising has progressed through two stages: preinsurgency and incipient conflict. It has other phases through which to progress: open

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<sup>13</sup> Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 35; Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Collier, “Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy,” in *Leashing the Dogs of War*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Hampson Osler and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 199.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 25–62; Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 78; Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), Location 378; O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 139.

<sup>16</sup> Jones and Johnston, “The Future of Insurgency,” 8.

<sup>17</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 72.

insurgency and resolution.<sup>18</sup> These phases, and specifically the open insurgency phase, may last for extended periods of time, with an average insurgency historically persisting for over a decade. Insurgencies may seem to be defeated and disappear only to reappear years later. This is what tends to complicate the end of conflict or the seeming resolution of an insurgency. Connable and Libicki point to three possible outcomes: a government victory (in which case an insurgency can reappear depending on conditions), an insurgent victory (generally more stable), or a negotiated settlement (also historically indicative of future conflict).<sup>19</sup> In Africa, Day and Reno find that negotiated settlement have occurred roughly 40% of the time, a higher proportion than the global average.<sup>20</sup> The resourcing of an insurgency is significant in determining its persistence; however, by definition, the insurgents are not acting in a vacuum. Even more significant, as O'Neill argues, is the response of the government to the organized rebellion.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Government Reaction to Insurgency

Governments typically respond in one of two ways to an insurgency: they will either seek to combat and defeat it, or they will choose to ignore it. First, a government can choose to counter or combat the insurgency. This approach has traditionally been referred to as counterinsurgency, or COIN. Most of the literature dealing with COIN overlaps with that on insurgencies. In contrast to conventional warfare, the state's approach to counterinsurgency must strike some balance between the employment of political and military power—strongly favoring the political. Ideally the state will acknowledge that the insurgency has arisen in response to some grievance.<sup>22</sup> The literature is unanimous that no single strategy, tactic, force ratio, or posture is effective in every situation. O'Neill points out that as insurgencies diverge in their grievances, goals,

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<sup>18</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* (Langley: United States Central Intelligence Agency, 2012), 5–22; Gordon H. McCormick, Steven B. Horton, and Lauren A. Harrison, “Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars,” *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007), 323.

<sup>19</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 14–20.

<sup>20</sup> Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 106.

<sup>21</sup> O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 155.

<sup>22</sup> Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 71; Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 113, 127; Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Handbook* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007), 1–22.

strength, support, etc., so must the governments adapt their approaches to meet the threat.<sup>23</sup> Scholars and COIN practitioners have grouped counterinsurgency strategy and government courses of action into three broad categories: the enemy or rebel-centric approach, the population-centric approach, and the authoritarian approach.<sup>24</sup>

The enemy-centric approach, also referred to as search-and-destroy or “killing guerrillas,” has proven to be the least effective method, but is generally the most practiced in Africa.<sup>25</sup> It attempts to view the insurgents as a conventional force and utilizes conventional military tactics to hunt down and combat them with little regard for the security of the surrounding population, giving little attention to their socio-economic well-being and little interest in holding and controlling territory. O’Neill argues that this conventional military approach, by neglecting political and economic considerations, generally works counter to the government.<sup>26</sup> As Collier explains, this approach helps make the prospect of guerrilla warfare so attractive to insurgents—governments are generally very bad at COIN.<sup>27</sup>

Day and Reno argue that African governments are most likely to execute an enemy-centric campaign. The authors note that most insurgencies in Africa are led by individuals who may have previously been close to the regime and are struggling for power within an existing patronage network. For both the insurgents and the government, the population matters little in this struggle for power. The government’s focus is on eliminating the insurgents and cutting off their material resources.<sup>28</sup> So long as the government neglects the population, and the valuable intelligence they could provide, the

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<sup>23</sup> O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 156.

<sup>24</sup> Michael J. Engelhardt, “Democracies, Dictatorships and Counterinsurgency: Does Regime Type really Matter?” *Conflict Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (Summer, 1992), 57; Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 16; Boot, *Invisible Armies*, 180; Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 110; Yuri Zhukov, “Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-Insurgency: The Soviet Campaign Against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (2007), 441.

<sup>25</sup> Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 111.

<sup>26</sup> O’Neill E., *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> Collier, “Economic Causes of Civil Conflict,” 198.

<sup>28</sup> Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 112.

insurgents stand a significant chance of persisting for a longer period of time. In this scenario, the population loses.

The population-centric approach is widely viewed as the most effective method of prosecuting counter-insurgency. It is commonly, if somewhat misleadingly, referred to as the “hearts and minds” approach. A more descriptive term might be clear-and-hold, with an emphasis on policing actions.<sup>29</sup> This strategy was pioneered by French COIN practitioners Gallieni and Lyautey in Asia and Africa. Population-centric COIN has gained wide acceptance, with minor variations, as the most effective method of prosecuting COIN.<sup>30</sup> Drawing from the literature, the most essential elements of this strategy are security, control, and governance. The government strives to eliminate the insurgent threat from a village by relying on local intelligence and then holds that territory and exerts its influence over the area. By so doing, even members of the population with insurgent sympathies will stay in line and be unable to support the insurgency.<sup>31</sup>

Day and Reno emphasize that population-centric COIN has rarely been practiced by African regimes. All too often African regimes rule through patron-client networks instead of strong institutions. They therefore tend to practice enemy-centric approaches.<sup>32</sup> Despite population-centric COIN being recognized as the best approach, it has also yielded long and persistent counterinsurgency struggles.

The literature pays somewhat less attention to the authoritarian approach. In applying this strategy the government is not concerned for the population and often employs scorched-earth tactics. Engelhardt argues that the authoritarian approach is used

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Dixon, “Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009), 360.

<sup>30</sup> Etienne de Durand, “France,” in *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, eds. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffrey Treistman, “Home Away from Home: Dynamics of Counterinsurgency Warfare,” *Comparative Strategy* 31, no. 3 (2012), 236; Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 119; McCormick, Horton and Harrison, “Things Fall Apart,” 322; Peter Mansoor, “Army,” in *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, eds. Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (New York: Routledge, 2010), 75; Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 126; Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 107.

<sup>32</sup> Day and Reno, “In Harm’s Way,” 107.

by dictatorships and repressive regimes, blurring the line with the enemy-centric approach.<sup>33</sup> Zhukov outlines the specific advantages an authoritarian regime enjoys when prosecuting COIN: Population control measures, aggressive intelligence collection, and a lack of popular pressure to restrain force.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately the control regime or police state eradicates incipient insurgencies at an early stage. However, recent history, however, demonstrates that when authoritarian regimes fail, they fail catastrophically and latent or even new insurgent movements will then quickly rise to challenge the failing regime—Libya, Syria, Iraq are prime examples. The authoritarian COIN approach does not figure in the case studies examined in this thesis.

Because these overarching COIN strategies are very general in nature, the literature is clear that every situation requires its own mix of different strategies and tactics if the government hopes to successfully counter the insurgent threat. For instance David Kilcullen, Scott et al., and O'Neill emphasize the importance of different approaches and adaptability for every insurgency.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Government Inaction

What much of the COIN literature does not consider is that a government may choose to not respond sufficiently to an incipient, growing, or ongoing insurgency. Not responding sufficiently might be logical in some situations. This response seems less obvious to a Western student of conflict: if a movement seeks to wrest control from the government, the government must do something to counter it. But countering in a developing world context is easier. Two reasons can help explain anemic responses in the developing world; the government does not have sufficient resources to counter the insurgency (*unable* to counter) or the government consciously chooses to underperform for political or economic reasons (*does not want* to counter).

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<sup>33</sup> Engelhardt, “Democracies, Dictatorships and Counterinsurgency,” 55–57.

<sup>34</sup> Zhukov, “Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-Insurgency,” 441.

<sup>35</sup> David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 183; Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 113; O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 156.

Logically, if a state does not have the resources to counter the insurgency, over time the insurgency will grow to the point that it will supplant the government. Most African states could fall into this category of being unable to muster the resources to counter a sizeable insurgency. Jean-Paul Azam argues that African governments must provide healthcare and primary education for all in order to prevent legitimate rebellion. Few African governments have demonstrated a capacity to meet this threshold.<sup>36</sup>

When it comes to the resources necessary to actually combat the insurgency, the government must be able to commit to a decade-long struggle and maintain a constant stream of trained and equipped security forces. For instance, Connable and Libicki put the required ratio of security force personnel to population at about 20:1000 in areas cleared of insurgents in order to maintain order and prevent recapture by insurgents.<sup>37</sup> This is a very sizeable force to keep employed and deployed for a decade. It is entirely plausible that an African government would not have the resources to maintain this level of commitment to decisively defeat an insurgency. This does not mean that government is completely helpless, or totally resource poor. Perhaps the insurgency has outstripped its abilities thanks to outside support. The government also might employ an ineffective COIN strategy or might not be able to muster the resources sufficient to defeat the insurgency.

While a great deal of literature focuses on the resources necessary to support an insurgency or the state, intentional government inaction by a capable state has received little attention. The relative lack of literature addressing government inaction is likely due to the fact that, in practice, no government has fallen directly into this category of inaction and succeeded in maintaining power. Instead of drawing a binary distinction between government action and government inaction, these distinctions likely represent either end of a spectrum, along which different levels of government response fall. Even the weakest and poorest of governments is institutionally and economically stronger than a nascent insurgency. Naturally, as Scott et al. point out, the government's primary

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<sup>36</sup> Jean-Paul Azam, "The Redistributive State and Conflicts in Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 1 (2001), 433.

<sup>37</sup> Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 134–135.

objective is to maintain adequate strength to stay in power.<sup>38</sup> It will therefore expend the resources necessary to remain in power—perhaps securing the capital while giving up more sparsely populated rural areas to the insurgency. Essentially it might opt to expend the minimum effort necessary to prevent its takeover and instead accept a de facto stalemate.

#### **4. Conflict Persistence for Political Reasons**

Government inaction in the context of this thesis refers to a capable state that chooses to permit an insurgency to persist for political or economic reasons. The government may do the minimum necessary to prevent the insurgents' outright victory. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz argue that in the patron/client system that is germane to Africa, the patron will permit violence to maintain necessary relationships with clients in order to maintain power.<sup>39</sup> Clients affected by conflict will be forced to continue to rely on the patron for some form of protection. This form of violence might permit an insurgency to grow and even govern in a politically marginal part of the country, to force continued reliance on the center. This condition allows the regime to channel resources to well-connected clients while allowing continued conflict among less politically relevant groups.

In this manner, regional instability would serve the needs of the center. In a region disloyal to the ruler, instability would not only force reliance on the center but also prevent organized dissent. People concerned for their survival would have less time and energy to pose a political risk. David Keen argues for the usefulness of internal conflict to enfeeble political opposition, absorb the efforts of discontented citizens, and intimidate those who might pose a political challenge.<sup>40</sup> An insurgency would maintain instability in a region to the political advantage of the center. A ruler seeking to maintain power would benefit politically from a persistent insurgency destabilizing an oppositional region. Such

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<sup>38</sup> Scott et al., *Insurgency*, 121.

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington, IN: International African Institute, 1999), 80.

<sup>40</sup> David Keen, *Useful Enemies: When Waging Wars Is More Important than Winning Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 109–112.

a regime would only take measures to prevent the insurgency from spilling over to other regions or from threatening the center.

Azam continues this logic, overlaying an ethnic dimension to the redistribution of resources. As long as an insurgent ethnic group does not threaten the center of the state, the state can continue to divert resources away from certain groups without threat of overthrow.<sup>41</sup> Clionadh Raleigh refers to these ethnic groups as “politically irrelevant,” in that the government does not derive its power base from these groups and can therefore afford to marginalize them.<sup>42</sup> The literature explains the ability and some rationale for a state to intentionally neglect an ongoing insurgency; however, it fails to directly explain why a capable and resourced government would permit this violence to perpetuate for years, ultimately challenging its sovereignty.

## 5. Conflict Persistence for Economic Reasons

Ongoing insurgent conflict might also economically benefit governmental elites, incentivizing the continued conflict. Much has been written about war-economies. For instance, Philippa Atkinson discusses this phenomenon in respect to Liberia, where the conflict allowed factions within the government to directly profit from the country’s natural resources.<sup>43</sup> The conflict then enables members of the elite to justify not having to share resource wealth with the population. The international market often prevents significant foreign intervention in these conflicts. Reno explains a situation whereby elites profit from a “free-lance accumulation of wealth.”<sup>44</sup> As Keen explains, the conflict allows the government to use violence to maintain a monopoly on access to resources.<sup>45</sup> Keen outlines seven significant categories of illicit economic activity that appear during

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<sup>41</sup> Azam, “The Redistributive State and Conflicts in Africa,” 429.

<sup>42</sup> Clionadh Raleigh, “Political Marginalization, Climate Change, and Conflict in African Sahel States,” *International Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2010), 70.

<sup>43</sup> Philippa Atkinson, *The War Economy in Liberia: A Political Analysis* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 1997), 13.

<sup>44</sup> William Reno, “The Real (War) Economy of Angola,” in *Angola’s War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, eds. Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich (Helsinki: Institute for Security Studies Africa, 2000), 223.

<sup>45</sup> David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11.

civil conflicts: pillage, protection money, controlling or monopolizing trade, labor exploitation, land seizure, stealing aid supplies, and enhanced benefits for the military.<sup>46</sup> If an insurgency proves to be profitable for elites, they have less incentive to put an end to it. Not only will they not want to jeopardize current profits, but they also will not want potential post-conflict investigations into their illicit activities.

Certainly not all conflict-associated economic benefits are illicit. Foreign and humanitarian aid programs are often directed toward conflict areas, providing services that the government is unwilling or unable to provide on its own. While helpful to the people who receive it, the aid can also be siphoned off.<sup>47</sup> As Andrew Mwenda explains, conflict often serves as a legitimate justification for substantial increases to the military budget. This increase cements the loyalty of the military leadership while also providing an avenue for corruption.<sup>48</sup>

Given the political and economic benefits to be gleaned from the conflict, we are left with four questions why insurgencies may be prolonged. Does an insurgency persist because it is well resourced? Because the government is under resourced? Or because the actors involved derive some political or economic benefit therefrom?

#### D. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to further understand government responses to insurgency in Africa, this thesis focuses on two case studies with the goal of demonstrating instances when a sitting government may have demonstrably allowed an insurgency to persist, despite a legitimate ability to counter it. The research question grew out of a desire to understand why Nigeria, with the largest economy in Africa, has been seemingly ineffective in defeating Boko Haram. In comparison, over the last two decades Uganda has similarly enjoyed sustained economic growth, freedom of speech, multi-party politics, a robust civil

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<sup>46</sup> Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Andreas, “The Clandestine Political Economy of War and Peace in Bosnia,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2004), 38.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict: The Political Uses of the LRA Rebellion,” in *Lord’s Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, eds. Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 50–51. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nps/Top?id=10409306>.

society, and a generally capable Ugandan military with extensive outside support. However, the LRA persisted in Uganda from the late 1980s until 2007. Why?

#### **E. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis is organized around the two case studies previously mentioned. Chapter II examines the background and issues at play in Uganda's struggle against the LRA, focusing on the resourcing of the insurgency and the government, followed by an examination of who might have benefitted politically or economically. Chapter III similarly examines Nigeria and Boko Haram. Chapter IV then more closely compares and contrasts the two cases and analyzes the possibility and implications of intentional neglect.

## **II. UGANDA AND THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY**

In 1991, Uganda launched a violently oppressive military campaign, Operation North, against Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda. While purporting to represent the oppressed and marginalized people of the north, over time the LRA came to be increasingly viewed as a scourge. Despite the shift in local sentiment, the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) was brutal in its prosecution of this operation, resorting to torture and indiscriminate killing to root out what at that time was a four-year-old insurgency. According to numerous assessments, the operation was very nearly successful in routing the insurgency before an unexplained change in tactics drastically softened the army's approach and halted its progress in destroying the insurgency.<sup>49</sup> The LRA escaped intact and, although significantly diminished and no longer a threat to Uganda, remains at large.

What explains the long persistence of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda? Is it best explained by a well-resourced insurgency, an under-resourced state, or a combination of political and economic reasons of benefit to the Ugandan government? The conflict between the LRA and the government of Uganda presents an interesting case study for numerous reasons: the LRA's 20-year-long reign of terror in the northern part of the country; Uganda's post-conflict reconstruction and relative economic growth during this same timeframe; and Uganda's political dynamics. This chapter begins by outlining a brief history of the conflict between the LRA and the government of Uganda. Next, it examines the strong insurgency hypothesis as an explanation for the LRA's persistence. The chapter then examines the under-resourced state hypothesis and whether Uganda was unable to counter the threat. Finally, the chapter examines what might have been the political and economic motivations on the part of the Ugandan government to allow the LRA to persist. This case is significant in that it ultimately ends in the government's favor (while Kony and the LRA continue to exist, they no longer pose a

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<sup>49</sup> Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *African Affairs* 98, no. 390 (1999), 23; Paul Jackson, "The March of the Lord's Resistance Army: Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda?" *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 13, no. 3 (2002), 41.

threat to the government of Uganda); nevertheless, why did a small, regional insurgency become significant and persist for 20 years?

## A. HISTORY OF UGANDA/LRA CONFLICT

### 1. Colonial Rule to Independence

From colonial times, the principal people of what became northern Uganda, the Acholi, were treated differently. Economic development in the colony of Uganda focused on the resource rich Luwero triangle (between Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, and Lake Kuyoga) in middle of the country. The British introduced cash crops into this fertile region, drawing labor from less productive regions, such as the north.<sup>50</sup> This colonial investment in specific regions left the north of the colony relatively underdeveloped; military service was encouraged among northern ethnic groups such as the Acholi who had few other options for employment.<sup>51</sup> Because of this early distinction, the Acholi became the principal ethnicity within the colony's military forces. This situation continued beyond the colonial period with the Acholi casting itself as the military or warrior ethnicity.<sup>52</sup> This, in essence, created a military class or ethnicity within the colony and subsequent independent state of Uganda.<sup>53</sup>

Independence came to Uganda in 1962. At independence, the prime minister and eventual president, Milton Obote, extended governmental and ministerial positions to key Acholi people within the party structure.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the independent Ugandan military grew from a colonial security apparatus to a professional military. The Acholi, previously overrepresented in the military, remained overrepresented in all ranks. Under

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<sup>50</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Adam Branch, "Exploring the Roots of LRA Violence: Political Crisis and Ethnic Politics in Acholiland," in *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, eds. Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 27.

Obote, an estimated one third of the Ugandan military came from the north, with similar rates within the civil service.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. 1970s–1980s

When the Obote regime was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1972, the new president leveraged ethnic differences to help consolidate power. Amin identified the Acholi and other northern ethnic groups as complicit with the Obote regime in its oppression of others.<sup>56</sup> Blaming them for a poor economy and corruption of the Obote regime, Amin eliminated the Acholi from positions of authority within the government and military.<sup>57</sup> To escape persecution, most Acholi elite fled to southern Sudan while those who remained in northern Uganda endured the terror of Amin’s regime.<sup>58</sup> While certainly not the sole target of Amin’s violence, many Acholi were individually purged, killed, and the ethnic group as a whole was marginalized and lost all political influence. Obote, at the head of the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA) and with Tanzanian assistance, overthrew Amin in 1979 and was returned to power. Obote, himself a northerner but not Acholi, received significant support from the Acholi. This change in power returned the Acholi to the center of the military and political influence by the early 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

Soon after Obote resumed the presidency, another insurgency developed: the National Resistance Movement (NRM) of Yoweri Museveni. Museveni proved successful in uniting many southern ethnic groups to counter what they perceived to be a repressive and northern-dominated Obote government.<sup>60</sup> From 1981, the NRM made progress against government forces, especially in the economically critical Luwero triangle. In 1983 Obote launched Operation Bonanza, a brutal and murderous campaign that killed an estimated 300,000 civilians in central Uganda—most Ugandans held the

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<sup>55</sup> Branch, “Exploring the Roots of LRA Violence,” 29.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 30.

<sup>58</sup> Adam Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda, 1986–1998,” *African Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2005), 10.

<sup>59</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, “Kony’s Message,” 9.

<sup>60</sup> Branch, “Exploring the Roots of LRA Violence,” 30.

Acholi responsible for this atrocity.<sup>61</sup> As the NRM continued its march to the capital, the military leadership lost confidence in Obote. The peak of Acholi power in Uganda occurred in 1985 when General Lutwa, an Acholi, overthrew Obote.<sup>62</sup> Lutwa's regime was also short lived as the NRM continued its military gains against the UNLA. Peace talks failed to halt the conflict, and ultimately the NRM took the capital and brought Museveni to power in 1986.

### **3. NRM Rule and UPDM Uprising**

Museveni created a new type of no-party democracy to rebuild a war-torn Uganda. The National Resistance Army (NRA) continued to fight the remaining elements of the UNLA as they fled north. The insurgent army of the NRM had become the national army of Uganda and Museveni filled the government with southerners. The perception among the Acholi was that a new southern dominated government would govern at their expense and would punish them for their prominence in the UNLA and the atrocities they are alleged to have committed during Operation Bonanza. The NRA chased the UNLA north into southern Sudan and proceeded to occupy the north as if it were a foreign, hostile territory.<sup>63</sup> The Acholi became a divided, conquered, and oppressed people in an economically depressed region far removed from the center of power in Uganda.

As the NRA consolidated control of the north, the elements of the UNLA that had escaped to Sudan were reorganizing. In early 1986, an amalgamation of supporters, politicians, and military leaders from the Obote and Amin regimes, many of whom were Acholi, rapidly formed a well organized resistance; the Ugandan People's Defense Movement (UPDM). The UPDM based in London, while its active military arm, the Ugandan People's Defense Army (UPDA), operated out of Sudan. Many Acholi sympathized with the UPDA and actively supported it. Most Acholi viewed the NRA as a hostile occupying force determined to eradicate the Acholi.<sup>64</sup> The UPDA enjoyed early

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<sup>61</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 36.

<sup>62</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 9.

<sup>63</sup> Branch, "Exploring the Roots of LRA Violence," 29.

<sup>64</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 15.

successes in both conventional battles and guerrilla raids against the NRA. Attacking from southern Sudan into northern Uganda, the UPDA had substantial local support.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, by the middle of 1986, these early gains dissipated and, during the next six months, the UPDM lost support and fractured politically. The UPDA deteriorated as the insurgency ran short of ammunition and resources in the face of a stronger NRA.<sup>66</sup> Despite the demise of the UPDM/A, by late 1986 the Acholi were far from pacified and continued to feel oppressed at the hands of the Museveni government.

#### **4. The Holy Spirit Movement**

As the UPDM was falling apart, a woman named Alice Lakwena organized what came to be known as the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). Claiming divine provenance, Lakwena appealed to the cultural and religious foundations of the Acholi community. The HSM fused elements of Christianity with traditional beliefs, advocating a divine mandate for the Acholi to reassert its strength against an evil and corrupt government.<sup>67</sup> Lakwena managed to rally former UNLA soldiers, elements of the UPDM, support from Acholi elders, and subsequently the support of other ethnic groups who felt equally oppressed by Museveni's government. At the HSM's peak in mid-1987, Lakwena led between 7,000–10,000 troops.<sup>68</sup>

Her insurgent army enjoyed rapid success, and by the end of 1987 had moved to within 12 miles of the capital, Kampala. The further her force got from Acholiland, however, the less support it enjoyed, while it also began to outrun its resources. The NRA succeeded in pushing back and dispersing the northern-based insurgency, eliminating it as a threat by the end of 1987. Once again the Acholi people viewed themselves as defeated, and economically and socially repressed, with little recourse for regaining a voice in a southern-dominated Uganda.

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<sup>65</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 15.

<sup>66</sup> Frank Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004), 342; Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 15.

<sup>67</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 39.

<sup>68</sup> Branch, "Exploring the Roots of LRA Violence," 37.

The movement defeated, Lakwena escaped the country. Northerners' grievances continued to mount, and soon Joseph Kony took up where the Holy Spirit Movement left off. Kony had served in the UNLA as a battalion commander and participated in the HSM. He initially derived authority by claiming to be a cousin and spiritual successor to Lakwena.<sup>69</sup> Despite this provenance, he was not unanimously accepted by the Acholi leadership; he was not considered representative of the people.<sup>70</sup> Kony found enough support that he was able to organize the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). He set out initially to overthrow Museveni's government and install a representative government based on the Ten Commandments. He left details beyond this extremely vague.<sup>71</sup>

## 5. The Government Response

Curiously, the NRA, that had so soundly defeated the UPDA and HSM, quickly found itself ill-prepared for the guerrilla conflict emerging with the LRA. Both the government and military seemed equally unmotivated to combat it. The Ugandan government and NRA initially perceived the LRA to be more of a criminal movement than an insurgency. Quinn contends that the standard government response to insurgent groups during this period (of which there were at least 27 after Museveni came to power) was to ignore them; and, if forced to confront them, to do so in a brutal military manner. Unsurprisingly, this approach was generally unsuccessful, especially against the LRA.<sup>72</sup>

The brutal tactics employed by the NRA in COIN operations demonstrated an institutionalized lack of professionalism within the officer corps. It was evident, too, that these, atrocities were tacitly tolerated by the political authorities since nothing was done to discipline the guilty. Schomerus cites this lack of professionalism as the reason for the prolongation of the war.<sup>73</sup> Branch goes further, stating that troops deployed to northern

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<sup>69</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 21.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>71</sup> Aili Mari Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), 160.

<sup>72</sup> Joanna R. Quinn, "Getting to Peace? Negotiating with the LRA in Northern Uganda," *Human Rights Review* 10, no. 1 (2009), 58–59.

<sup>73</sup> Mareike Schomerus, "They Forget What They Came for: Uganda's Army in Sudan," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2012), 130.

Uganda lacked sufficient equipment and morale; when coupled with corruption, this created a military with a curtailed capacity or will to fight.<sup>74</sup> The lack of discipline clearly affected the ability of the military to deal with the growing insurgency.

Ugandan divisions sent to combat the insurgency, which on paper consisted of 7,200 troops, were lucky to have 1,500 combat capable soldiers engaging the enemy.<sup>75</sup> The Ugandan troops did not demonstrate a significant desire to fight. Nor did the officers decisively lead their troops toward defeating the LRA. Regular reports indicated UPDF troops arrived in areas well after the LRA had attacked and left. Despite constantly increasing military budgets, the UPDF troops remained in poor condition. The government consistently failed to improve the situation or properly train and equip its soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

The UPDF also organized Acholi militias from people contained in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. These militias received minimal weaponry and training, yet were sent to battle the LRA while the UPDF remained in barracks.<sup>77</sup> The military used the militias as another method of avoiding combat with the LRA. During this period, Museveni consistently failed to address the lack of professionalism and fighting spirit of his military and failed to hold his senior generals accountable for their failure to end the conflict.

## 6. The Lord’s Resistance Army

Over time, the LRA’s political motivations became more obscure, and by the mid-1990s, the organization seemed to espouse no agenda beyond violence and terror.<sup>78</sup> Many senior leaders of the UPDA had joined Kony and were assigned leadership positions within the organization. These experienced leaders advocated guerrilla tactics and terror

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<sup>74</sup> Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice,” 2–3.

<sup>75</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 43.

<sup>76</sup> Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice,” 2.

<sup>77</sup> Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 139; Alexis Arief and Lauren Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” *Current Politics and Economics of Africa* 5, no. 4 (2012): 505.

<sup>78</sup> Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice,” 6–7.

rather than the conventional tactics used by the UPDA and HSM.<sup>79</sup> This lent the LRA a decidedly different footprint than other insurgencies. The focus on guerrilla tactics dispersed the active fighters widely among the population. By the early-1990s, the Acholi increasingly turned against the LRA, viewing it as an unrepresentative group of thugs. Likewise, in response to the Acholi militias, the LRA turned against the Acholi.<sup>80</sup> This marked a significant change in the progression of the conflict as the Acholi found themselves victims of both the government forces as well as the LRA.

During its 20 years of activity in northern Uganda, the LRA's size has fluctuated; at its peak the group was estimated to have around 5,000 active fighters. By 1991, after the LRA lost local Acholi support, it continued to fill its ranks through coercive means and by abducting children to fight on its behalf. Estimates vary, but one survey found that by 2001 nearly 10,000 children had been abducted and pressed into service by the LRA.<sup>81</sup> Throughout much of this period, thousands of children flocked into protected areas of the city of Gulu every night to prevent being kidnapped—they became known to as the “night children.” This aspect of the LRA conflict attracted a high degree of international attention. Numerous NGOs exerted efforts to protect the children from abduction and attempted to reintegrate the child soldiers back into society.<sup>82</sup> At times, the LRA forces dwindled to no more than a few hundred active fighters, but always managed to regenerate even in relatively underpopulated northern Uganda; coercion and kidnapping proved highly effective.<sup>83</sup>

By the mid-1990s, the conflict had assumed a regional dynamic. From roughly 1993, Sudan provided weapons, supplies, and a safe haven to the LRA in southern Sudan. The LRA headquarters was located in Juba, Sudan until the early 2000s.<sup>84</sup> This assistance

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<sup>79</sup> Van Acker, “The New Order No One Ordered,” 348.

<sup>80</sup> Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice,” 16.

<sup>81</sup> Chris Dolan, “Which Children Count? The Politics of Children’s Rights in Northern Uganda,” *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, no. 11 (2002), 68.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>83</sup> Robert L. Feldman, “Why Uganda Has Failed to Defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army,” *Defence & Security Analysis* 24, no. 1 (2008), 50.

<sup>84</sup> Schomerus, “They Forget What They Came for,” 126.

helped turn Kony's force from a bush army equipped with rudimentary weapons into one capable of employing automatic weapons and explosives.<sup>85</sup> This support likely continued until roughly 2001, when the Khartoum government and Ugandan government agreed to no longer support each other's insurgencies.<sup>86</sup> While Sudan's support likely proved critical through the 1990s, Kony's force proved strong enough to carry on without it. Ultimately, the group was strongest, most lethal, and most operationally effective when it was actively supported by Sudan.

## 7. Attempts to Resolve Conflict

Over the course of the insurgency, the central government's posture and commitment to fight has seemed to wax and wane. The NRA, renamed the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) in 1995, maintained a deployed presence in northern Uganda throughout the conflict. The force was generally composed of small numbers of ill-equipped and under-resourced troops who eschewed combat as much as possible. Military leaders organized occasional military operations to push out the insurgency. These operations were highly violent and placed little emphasis on protecting civilian lives.<sup>87</sup> Unsuccessful peace talks took place from 1993 to 1994 and again from 2006 to 2008 between these military operations. By 2006, the government finally succeeded in driving the LRA out of Uganda.<sup>88</sup> The LRA continued to function and wreak havoc in neighboring countries while the Ugandan government, in cooperation with its neighbors, maintained a minimum of military pressure. These varying approaches, which were sufficient to conclude the conflict, served to outwardly demonstrate resolve without substantial cost to the Museveni regime.

Museveni did not maintain constant pressure on the insurgency, and was known to release pressure when the LRA was nearly defeated.<sup>89</sup> The units he sent to combat the

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<sup>85</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 30.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>87</sup> Schomerus, "They Forget What They Came for," 130; Arieff and Ploch, "The Lord's Resistance Army: The U.S. Response," 7.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 41.

insurgency were mere shells of true combat divisions; the best trained and equipped units remained in the capital, far from combat. Also, Museveni did not deploy the elite Presidential Guard to the region until 2003.<sup>90</sup> When finally deployed, this highly-trained and well-equipped unit likely contributed to the UPDF's ultimate success in routing the LRA from the country. Otherwise, the preceding lack of military resolve suggests that Museveni was, at the very least, apathetic to the existence of the insurgency in northern Uganda.

While the military effort to end the insurgency was ongoing, the government and the LRA entered into peace negotiations to put an end to hostilities on at least two occasions. The first round of peace talks took place in 1994. A fractious LRA proved difficult for the government to deal with, and Kony requested a six-month long period in which to allegedly rally his forces around a peace agreement. Museveni reacted harshly to Kony's request, demanding LRA disarmament in a single week. In so doing, Museveni dismantled the peace process. Museveni claimed (perhaps accurately) that Kony was using the ceasefire and peace talks to stall until he received Sudanese assistance.<sup>91</sup>

What is telling is that Museveni had negotiated with other insurgent groups—to include the UPDA, during the 1998 Gulu peace accords. These talks granted amnesty to UPDA combatants, and even integrated some combatants into the NRA/UPDF. Despite conciliatory successes like these, Museveni consistently took a hardline approach with the LRA.<sup>92</sup> Nearly a decade later, the government and the LRA agreed to a new round of peace talks in 2006. The talks, which began with a short-lived August 2006 ceasefire, continued for over two years. During the negotiations, the LRA accused the UPDF of violating the ceasefire and surrounding the remnants of the LRA in Uganda. Also, while the talks were ongoing, Uganda launched Operation Lighting Thunder in December 2008.<sup>93</sup> This multinational pursuit of the LRA outside Uganda's borders effectively ended the prolonged and ultimately unsuccessful Juba peace talks. The LRA was

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<sup>90</sup> Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 137.

<sup>91</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 41–42.

<sup>92</sup> Quinn, "Getting to Peace," 61.

<sup>93</sup> Schomerus, "They Forget What They Came for," 129; Quinn, "Getting to Peace," 59.

complicit in the repeated failure of peace talks; however, the Museveni administration likewise contributed.

## **8. The LRA as Mechanism of Power**

In the early 2000s, the government went to great lengths to separate the people from the LRA by moving the Acholi and other northern groups into internal displacement camps. While initially created as refuges for northerners who lost homes to the conflict, the camps came to house over 1.8 million people by 2005, or 95% of the total Acholi population.<sup>94</sup> The conditions in these camps were abysmal with minimal services provided; and those services that were available were generally provided by NGOs, further distancing the Acholi from the central government.<sup>95</sup> At worst, approximately 1,000 people per day died in the IDP camps or, as Mwenda points out (echoed by Otunnu), far more IDPs died than the LRA could have killed.<sup>96</sup> While certainly an indictment on Museveni's treatment of the Acholi, the IDP camps succeeded in separating the northern people from the insurgents. This separation of the people from the insurgency likely contributed to the elimination of the LRA from Uganda in 2006. Although the IDP camps may have helped bring an end to the conflict, the abysmal conditions and governmental neglect are a further indictment on Museveni's approach to countering the LRA.

Museveni extended general amnesties at key points during the LRA conflict, drawing lessons from successful tactics used to counter the UPDA and HSM. These amnesties lured many fighters away from the LRA and facilitated their reintegration to society, child soldiers especially.<sup>97</sup> The amnesty was especially effective in the early

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<sup>94</sup> Ronald Raymond Atkinson, *From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2009), 4; Olara A. Otunnu, "The Secret Genocide," *Foreign Policy*, no. 155 (2006), 2.

<sup>95</sup> Mwenda, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict," 45.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.; Otunnu, "The Secret Genocide," 45.

<sup>97</sup> Arieff and Ploch, "The Lord's Resistance Army: The U.S. Response," 7.

2000s, with thousands abandoning the LRA and rejoining society—significantly weakening the insurgency.<sup>98</sup>

Tripp explained these mixed messages by Museveni of inconsistent amnesty, peace talks, ceasefires, and violent military operations as being a clever strategy to maintain control of and popularity with the military.<sup>99</sup> So long as the LRA continued to exist, Museveni had an enemy for the military to fight and a foe for the troops to rally against. This incentivized keeping the LRA around, whether that required pressing militias into the fight or stalling with peace talks that were doomed to fail. All proved to be effective tools in allowing the LRA to persist for nearly 30 years, while Museveni remains in power

Although the UPDF never defeated the LRA, the LRA moved into the vast under-governed territories of northeast Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from Sudan as well as into southeast Central African Republic. With U.S. military support, Uganda partnered with these countries to continue the search for Kony and the remaining LRA leaders. However, much of the terrain is difficult, and covers an area roughly the size of California.<sup>100</sup> While the fight against the LRA was never Uganda's top priority, it has fallen further down the list.<sup>101</sup> Whether this is the end of the LRA is difficult to tell. The LRA was a significant scourge on Uganda for nearly 20 years—a scourge that should have been dispatched much the same as the short-lived UPDA and HSM insurgencies before it. This chapter further explores why this insurgency managed to persist and why the government may have implicitly allowed its continued survival.

## B. STRONG INSURGENCY HYPOTHESIS

As outlined in Chapter I, an insurgency possesses certain advantages and disadvantages vis-a-vis the government. Generally the insurgency is at a resource

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<sup>98</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 44; Arieff and Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” 7.

<sup>99</sup> Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 32–33.

<sup>100</sup> Arieff and Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” 4.

<sup>101</sup> Ronald R. Atkinson et al., “Do no Harm: Assessing a Military Approach to the Lord’s Resistance Army,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (2012), 378.

disadvantage when confronting a national military and the economic ability of the state to support and equip that military. The insurgency is left to rely on the resources of its members, support from the population (either voluntary or coerced), and outside support. Despite this resource disadvantage, an insurgency facing a weak government might be relatively strong. Lacking the resources to pursue it, an insurgency might manage to take root and grow for an extended period of time. If this growth and relative strength continues unchecked, then the insurgency is in a position to overthrow the government.

Short of outright victory, an insurgency that endures for years might be assessed to be relatively strong, explaining its persistence. The Lord's Resistance Army has lasted for 20 years. It has continually managed to find the resources necessary to survive. This section explores the hypothesis that the LRA may have persisted because of its relative strength versus the Ugandan government. Despite the LRA's extended persistence, this section concludes that this hypothesis does not adequately explain the LRA's 20 year terrorizing of the Ugandan people. This section begins by examining the LRA's sources of manpower, financing, arming, and training. Next it continues with an examination of the LRA's territory and safe havens, and concludes with an assessment of the group's overall strength in contrast to that of the Ugandan government.

## **1. Manpower**

As previously described, the LRA grew out of other failed insurgencies. One of those insurgencies, the UPDA, had emerged from the ashes of the former Ugandan military. Kony was early able to organize his movement with trained military leaders and soldiers from the former national army. These trained soldiers gave his insurgency an advantage, but less than that enjoyed by the two previous movements that had more closely followed the fall of the Obote regime.<sup>102</sup> As Kony's group quickly became the dominant group rebelling against Museveni in the north, former UPDA troops found a natural home with him. Although well trained, his initial pool of recruits was limited as the UPDA and HSM had both suffered significant losses and failed. Furthermore, the

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<sup>102</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,"39.

amnesty granted by the Museveni government to UPDA and HSM troops drew thousands back into Ugandan society or directly into the NRA as government troops.<sup>103</sup>

Recruiting from the HSM and UPDA gave Kony an early cadre of leaders and soldiers; however, the insurgency needed a reliable source of recruits to pose a viable threat to the government. From the start, Kony lacked a steady pool of recruits. While purporting to represent the interests of the oppressed Acholi, most elders and villages viewed Kony as unrepresentative of the people.<sup>104</sup> This break deepened in the early 1990s as Kony felt unsupported by the Acholi during the failed peace talks. The LRA then began to prey on the Acholi.<sup>105</sup> This forced the LRA to turn to other means to build and replenish its ranks.

Deprived of significant numbers of volunteers, the LRA resorted to coercion and kidnapping in order to fill its ranks. Children were kidnapped in large numbers. They were often forced to commit atrocities against their own families or villages, inhibiting them from returning home. This technique of exploiting children has enabled the LRA to consistently regenerate its forces.<sup>106</sup> As Feldman points out, “the LRA’s ability to survive for all these years is a testament to its command, tactics, and almost inexhaustible supply of involuntary recruits.”<sup>107</sup>

Despite a lack of voluntary recruits, the group has not only demonstrated the ability to kidnap its way to sufficient manpower, but has also demonstrated a remarkable ability to maintain terrorist operations despite its small numbers. Over time, its estimated numbers have fluctuated from thousands to perhaps less than 200—with current estimates of its strength outside of Uganda at between 150 and 200 core fighters.<sup>108</sup> The insurgency has been defeated in Uganda, yet it has proven an ability to operate and regenerate in spite of small numbers.

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<sup>103</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 40.

<sup>104</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, “Kony’s Message,” 21.

<sup>105</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 41–42.

<sup>106</sup> Feldman, “Why Uganda Has Failed to Defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army,” 47.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>108</sup> Arieff and Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” 4.

## **2. Financing, Arming, and Training the Insurgency**

From the outset, the LRA professed to represent the interests of the oppressed Acholi people. Clearly, the Acholi ethnic group found itself in a disadvantaged position. The Museveni regime in its first decade of rule all but left the north and the Acholi out of its patronage networks, leaving the region economically and politically marginalized.<sup>109</sup> The north lacked the cash crops and economic development enjoyed by the south, further preventing the Acholi's emergence from a depressed condition.<sup>110</sup> Despite these circumstances, Kony did not enjoy the support from the population that normally might have been expected. By the early 1990s, the Acholi became legitimate LRA targets, as Kony became frustrated with a lack of support from what he viewed as "his people." Overall, reports of Acholi support for the LRA are mixed. Some evidence suggests that certain villages and individuals have consistently provided the LRA with food and support.<sup>111</sup> Whether from donated sources or through looting and coercion, Kony found the resources necessary to sustain an insurgent movement before any external support came his way.

As discussed in Chapter I, outside support for an insurgency can be a double edged sword. The influx of resources can give a jolt to beleaguered forces, allowing them to train and operate far beyond how they normally could. In response to Uganda's support for the SPLA, the LRA managed to gain support from Sudan in the 1990s. Khartoum shifted its stance from tolerating the LRA presence in Sudan, where Kony had his headquarters, to direct military support by 1994.<sup>112</sup> This external support regionalized the scope of the insurgency, as the LRA now openly operated in southern Sudan, in addition to Uganda.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "The Lord's Resistance Army and African International Relations," *African Security* 3, no. 1 (2010), 57.

<sup>110</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 47.

<sup>111</sup> Van Acker, "The New Order No One Ordered," 352.

<sup>112</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 24–25.

<sup>113</sup> Schomerus, "They Forget What They Came for," 126.

Jackson underlines the boost this support gave the LRA: “Sudanese government aid has turned the LRA from an ‘army’ equipped with stones, rifles, and machetes into one equipped with landmines and machine guns.”<sup>114</sup> The Sudanese support for the LRA amounted to a virtual proxy war between the two countries. This mutually subversive support continued until 1999 when both countries agreed to no longer intervene in the internal conflicts of the other (although some speculate lower levels of support to the LRA continued until 2004).<sup>115</sup> The LRA was markedly strongest and most operationally effective when receiving support from Sudan. During this time, the insurgency inflicted the most harm on the people of northern Uganda and southern Sudan.<sup>116</sup> Even so, the LRA was unable to gain the upper hand and never posed a legitimate threat to the government in Kampala. It was not even able to secure northern Uganda, its region of strength, as LRA controlled territory.

With the end of Sudanese support, the LRA seemed to enter a period of slow decline, while it still managed to fight in the face of increasing UPDF pressure. The UPDF launched two major operations in the 2000s, both of which failed to make any significant impact on the LRA’s small but widely distributed network of forces.<sup>117</sup> Once the LRA had vacated Uganda, taking up refuge in underpopulated and under-governed jungle areas of nearby DRC and Central African Republic, it extracted the resources it needed locally. Its dispersion over a wide area made it difficult for government forces to find and target the remaining LRA forces. Although the insurgency was well resourced at times, it was never sufficiently resourced to pose a legitimate threat to the state. This does not account for its longevity.

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<sup>114</sup> Jackson, “Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda,” 30.

<sup>115</sup> Dunn, “Lord’s Resistance Army and African International Relations,” 53.

<sup>116</sup> Jonathan Fisher, “Framing Kony: Uganda’s War, Obama’s Advisers, and the Nature of ‘Influence’ in Western Foreign Policy Making,” *Third World Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2014), 690; Doom and Vlassenroot, “Kony’s Message,” 24–25.

<sup>117</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda to the Congo*, 14.

### **3. Territory and Safe Havens**

The LRA was a northern-based insurgency that primarily operated in northern Uganda and its northern neighbors. The insurgency never threatened the capital. Nor was it able to gain an operational foothold in other areas of Uganda. Although it succeeded in launching terrorist attacks against cities, the LRA never took, held, or governed any city. Thanks to the vast and largely rural nature of the north, the LRA attained a degree of freedom of movement.<sup>118</sup> The Ugandan military's reluctance to pursue direct combat with the LRA further protected the LRA's position in the north Ugandan countryside.<sup>119</sup> Far from enjoying the safe haven enjoyed by other insurgencies that take and hold territory for extended periods of time, the LRA did occupy much of the rural north during the conflict.

The LRA found its greatest asset beyond Uganda's borders. During the 1990s, the group was headquartered in Juba, trained in camps throughout southern Sudan, and Kony himself was able to openly live in Juba with his family.<sup>120</sup> Coinciding with Sudanese material support, the LRA was at its operational apex when headquartered in southern Sudan.<sup>121</sup> Although having this safe haven failed to enable the LRA to topple the Ugandan government, it did contribute to the LRA's growth and persistence through the 1990s and early 2000s. This support may have contributed to the group's longevity without substantial local Acholi support.

Once Sudan ceased supporting the LRA, Khartoum permitted Ugandan troops to enter Sudan in pursuit of the LRA. At the same time, the SPLA equally put pressure on the LRA, eliminating its former safe haven.<sup>122</sup> In Uganda, the Ugandan government and military increased the scale of forced relocation of much of the northern population into the IDP camps. This effectively allowed the Ugandan military to clear the countryside of

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<sup>118</sup> Angelo Izama and Michael Wilkerson, "Uganda: Museveni's Triumph and Weakness," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 3 (2011), 72.

<sup>119</sup> Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 139.

<sup>120</sup> Schomerus, "They Forget What They Came for," 126.

<sup>121</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 30.

<sup>122</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 99 (2004), 142.

the LRA, and was central to the UPDF’s COIN campaign.<sup>123</sup> With aid from Sudan cut off, the Ugandan military proved capable of defeating the insurgency. A strong insurgency would have fared better, especially after 20 years of seasoning against a presumably weaker state—but turned out not to be the case.

#### **4. The LRA’s Overall Relative Weakness**

The LRA could never have been assessed as relatively stronger than the Ugandan state. While it did enjoy patronage from Sudan for a period, the LRA did not enjoy the universal support of the Acholi or any other northern ethnic group. This lack of support was reflected in the LRA’s inability to maintain a stream of volunteer recruits, as well as in the scarcity of its supplies. The reason for the LRA’s 20-plus year existence in Uganda cannot be attributed to its strengths or its resources.

### **C. UNDER-RESOURCED STATE HYPOTHESIS**

If an insurgency is insufficiently strong to gain outright victory, perhaps the state is also insufficiently strong to effectively counter and destroy it. This hypothesis could explain why an insurgency would be able to persist for an extended period of time. A weak state might be unable to put an end to the conflict, resulting in an extended status quo, wherein neither side destroys the other, but both persist. In the LRA’s case, it was never capable of posing a threat to the center of political power. At all times during the conflict the Ugandan state and military were sufficiently strong to prevent the LRA from posing a legitimate threat to the center of political power. This section demonstrates that Uganda was sufficiently resourced to counter the LRA by first examining the Ugandan economy and the foreign aid it was able to attract. It then analyzes the strength of the military, foreign military aid, and its capabilities during the LRA conflict. The argument to be made here is that Uganda was decidedly stronger than the LRA. It should have been able to put an end to the insurgency in a matter of years instead of allowing it to persist for over twenty.

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<sup>123</sup> Quinn, “Getting to Peace,” 57.

## **1. Economic Strength**

Macro-economically, Museveni's nearly 30 years rule has been an African success story. After periods of drastic decline during the Amin years, and stagnation during the early 1980s, Uganda has experienced sustained growth at an annual average of 6%.<sup>124</sup> The country became the international community's poster child for post-conflict reconstruction from the late 1980s into the 1990s. Annual foreign aid averaged \$650 million from 1987–1990 and \$738 million from 1991–2005.<sup>125</sup> The Museveni government was exceptionally cooperative with the international community and international financial institutions. The government liberalized, reformed the economy, and qualified for funding and financial programs at an impressive rate. Foreign governments contributed and lauded the Museveni government for its growth-inducing market reforms.<sup>126</sup> Despite these economic accomplishments, however, the substantial growth around the capital contrasted with the war-torn north. The remote northern regions of the country failed to benefit from this sustained growth.

## **2. Military Strength**

While Museveni surrendered most budgetary controls to the international financial institutions in exchange for debt relief and financing, he retained control over the defense budget to combat the LRA in the north.<sup>127</sup> This allowed him to increase the defense budget, year after year, from \$42 million in 1992 to \$260 million in 2010.<sup>128</sup> Uganda's key western ally, the U.S., has contributed further millions to aid the defense sector in its fight against the LRA, supplying millions in peacekeeping funds, anti-terror funds, and logistical supplies. The U.S. also contributed hundreds of millions in humanitarian aid.<sup>129</sup> Military support from the U.S. increased further thanks to the global

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<sup>124</sup> Ezra Sabiti Suruma, *Advancing the Ugandan Economy: A Personal Account* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2014), 186.

<sup>125</sup> Mwenda, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict," 47.

<sup>126</sup> Jonathan Fisher, "When It Pays to Be a 'Fragile State': Uganda's Use and Abuse of a Dubious Concept," *Third World Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2014), 323.

<sup>127</sup> Mwenda, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict," 50.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>129</sup> Arief and Ploch, "The Lord's Resistance Army: The U.S. Response," 12.

war on terror in the mid-2000s. This support culminated in 2011 with the deployment of special operations forces to provide assistance in the ongoing mission to capture Kony.<sup>130</sup> Museveni's government enjoyed substantial international military assistance throughout the counter LRA conflict. Museveni also frequently cited the humanitarian crisis in the north and threat posed by the LRA to successfully solicit economic and military assistance.<sup>131</sup>

International contributions coupled with Museveni's budgetary increases should have created a formidable Ugandan military. The government deployed roughly 20,000 troops to the north from 1986 onwards.<sup>132</sup> The military also organized home guard militias. Although these militias received very limited training and resources, they added substantial numbers to the government's counter-insurgency forces and increased regional security.<sup>133</sup> Elite units such as the Presidential Guard were also deployed to the region from about 2003 on.<sup>134</sup> Though it possessed only limited air assets, the army had the equipment necessary to attack and quickly move its troops to combat a less mobile foe.<sup>135</sup>

Despite substantial military capabilities, however, government forces struggled to deal with the insurgency. According to Feldman, available government resources should have been adequate to defeat the LRA despite equipment shortfalls, inadequate training, and corruption. The military possessed sufficient resources to mount successful attacks against the enemy.<sup>136</sup> Beyond resourcing, morale and professionalism must also be analyzed when assessing the military's capacity. Branch indicates a lack of professionalism by UPDF military leaders might have contributed to the LRA's persistence; he suggests that substantial resources were available, but misallocated.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Atkinson et al., "Do no Harm," 371.

<sup>131</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda to the Congo*, 9.

<sup>132</sup> Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 169.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>135</sup> Feldman, "Why Uganda Has Failed to Defeat the Lord's Resistance Army," 49.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Branch, "Neither Peace nor Justice," 2.

Instead, the government's apathy for both the military and the plight of the north allowed corruption to take precedence over military success.

If we look beyond resources, manning, and equipment, two additional facts strongly suggest that the Ugandan military was strong enough to defeat the LRA. Tripp points out that the NRA/UPDF had been successful in defeating the HSM and the UPDA, and had also confined the LRA to the north, suggesting that government forces were capable enough, if only there had been the will to eliminate the LRA.<sup>138</sup> An equally significant point is highlighted by Doom and Vlassenroot: the LRA was very nearly defeated during Operation North in 1991. Instead of continuing to fight until defeat, however, Museveni abruptly halted the offensive and allowed the LRA to survive.<sup>139</sup>

### **3. Sufficiently Strong State and Military**

The Ugandan military was sufficiently strong to counter the LRA. The fact that the military could have, but did not prevail, suggests that there might have been other reasons for the government to allow the LRA to persist. In sum, the hypothesis that the government and military were insufficiently resourced to counter the LRA does not fit. A more complete explanation must be sought elsewhere.

## **D. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT HYPOTHESIS**

While death and destruction are the visible results of conflict, some groups and individuals will seek to profit therefrom. When these individuals are in a position to manipulate the conflict for their continued benefit, they have little motivation to end it. In the case of the LRA, many individuals profited handsomely from the conflict, strongly disincentivizing an early end. The hypothesis that a war economy actively or passively motivated the continuation of the conflict, partially explains the LRA's persistence. To prove the hypothesis, this section examines the economic incentives associated with the government's desire to see the fight against the LRA continue. Next the section looks

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<sup>138</sup> Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 169–170.

<sup>139</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 23.

more specifically at individual profiteering from the conflict. With millions of dollars available for the taking, the 20-year conflict with the LRA comes into focus.

## **1. Government Profiteering**

Much has been written about the profitability of conflict, and the case of Uganda is no exception. While the north has been ravaged by the war, the rest of the country has benefitted from it. Museveni has been central to orchestrating the inflows of money from intergovernmental organizations, foreign donors, and other non-governmental aid organizations. Furthermore, the trickledown effect of this money has enriched individual members of government and military officers—who have also found profitable business opportunities thanks to the conflict. A conflict that could have been resolved within a few years was permitted to continue for the financial benefit of the well-connected.

As an economically depressed region, the north has long attracted the attention of international aid organizations. The total amount of aid provided by private aid organizations is difficult to quantify. Mwenda indicates that the IDP camps, which were home to a majority of the north's people, were almost exclusively funded by NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations.<sup>140</sup> Essential services normally provided by the government were essentially outsourced. The United States alone provided \$640 million in humanitarian aid between 2002 and 2011.<sup>141</sup> With government services in the north funded by outsiders, the conflict enabled the government to ignore an entire region and allocate their share of healthcare, education, and other government services to the rest of the country.

Back in the capital, the Ugandan government agreed to execute structural adjustment reforms. The central government handed over almost all budgetary control to the IMF. Museveni yielded to almost all foreign demands for economic reform.<sup>142</sup> Using these concessions as leverage, Museveni convinced the international community to allow

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<sup>140</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 45.

<sup>141</sup> Arieff and Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” 15.

<sup>142</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 50.

the government to retain control over the defense budget. Increases to military expenditures were justified given the suffering of the people at the hands of the LRA.

This helped to keep Museveni in the good graces of military leaders, maintaining his reputation as the father of the military.<sup>143</sup> Through this strategy, Museveni increased the defense budget from approximately \$42 million in 1992 to \$260 million in 2010—modest numbers by Western standards, but representing more than a six fold increase.<sup>144</sup> Significantly, these budget increases did seemingly little for front line troops. The money instead benefitted the central government’s patronage networks.<sup>145</sup> In a popularly cited case, the government made a controversial purchase of four helicopters from Ukraine in 1998—helicopters that were never airworthy.<sup>146</sup>

In addition to gaining a free hand with the military budget, Museveni used the conflict with the LRA to elicit further military aid from international donors, most notably the U.S. Fisher argues that Museveni consciously framed the conflict in terms designed to acquire military support in the manner that was most advantageous to him, instead of focusing on an end to the LRA.<sup>147</sup> His efforts yielded results. From 2008 through 2016, the U.S. contributed millions of dollars through various security assistance programs—even after Kony’s group had fled Uganda. The U.S. also deployed over 100 troops to directly assist in targeting the LRA.<sup>148</sup> An increase in the availability of military money at the top facilitated its misallocation throughout the government and military structure.

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<sup>143</sup> Izama and Wilkerson, “Uganda: Museveni’s Triumph and Weakness,” 68.

<sup>144</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 51.

<sup>145</sup> Feldman, “Why Uganda Has Failed to Defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army,” 56; Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 51.

<sup>146</sup> Izama and Wilkerson, “Uganda: Museveni’s Triumph and Weakness,” 69.

<sup>147</sup> Fisher, “Framing Kony,” 684.

<sup>148</sup> Arieff and Ploch, “The Lord’s Resistance Army: The U.S. Response,” 12; Atkinson et al., “Do no Harm,” 375.

## **2. Individual Profiteering**

While the conflict proved fiscally beneficial to Museveni’s central government, it proved personally lucrative to well-connected government and military officials. As previously mentioned, military officers had substantial opportunity for corruption in military acquisitions. This corruption had a deleterious effect on the front line troops’ ability to successfully fight the LRA.<sup>149</sup> Another well-documented phenomenon was the UPDF’s use of so-called “ghost soldiers.” As is still common in many places, UPDF commanders were tasked with dispensing pay to their soldiers. As the units involved in combat in the north began to take casualties, officers found they could neglect to report these casualties and continue to draw pay for the fallen and pocket or redistribute it.<sup>150</sup> The practice spread rapidly.

While “ghost soldiers” likely dated as far back as 1987, the government only began to take interest and investigate the practice in the early 2000s. The investigators found the issue to be rampant; one Major General (a nephew of Museveni) was found to have misappropriated approximately \$35.5 million and was eventually convicted.<sup>151</sup> Mwenda suggests that the “ghost soldiers” cost the government upwards of \$40 million per year.<sup>152</sup> Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, whistleblowers, even those with access to Museveni, were ignored, imprisoned, and tortured, indicating tacit approval of the practice.<sup>153</sup> This form of indirect patronage thus would have been one incentive for officers to ensure the prolongation of the conflict; a return to the barracks would require a more exact accounting of troops and a decrease in “ghost soldier” claims.

Commanders found additional paths to enrichment when operating outside of Uganda. During the UPDF deployment to the DRC in the late 1990s, rumors and accusations were rampant that officers engaged in illicit resource trafficking and

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<sup>149</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 50; Branch, “Neither Peace nor Justice,” 2; Feldman, “Why Uganda Has Failed to Defeat the Lord’s Resistance Army,” 46; Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 144.

<sup>150</sup> Dunn, “Uganda: The Lord’s Resistance Army,” 141.

<sup>151</sup> Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 144.

<sup>152</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 52.

<sup>153</sup> Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 145.

extraction. Officers had gained experience building small businesses in the north and among the IDP camps, a practice they then continued in southern Sudan. Some small-scale trafficking involved supplies and military equipment but grew to include teak logging and smuggling.<sup>154</sup> Among officers, such practices were generally not viewed as illicit or corrupt since the austerity measures had stripped the budget of education, healthcare, retirement pensions, and combat death benefits for their families. As officers came up with ways to care for their families, the government generally looked the other way.<sup>155</sup>

Meanwhile, the rank and file, who did not receive the benefit of combat pay (an officer incentive) and often went unpaid when deployed outside the country, had significantly less access to such supplementary sources of income.<sup>156</sup> The patronage networks tended to stay at the officer level. Consequently, morale was generally low among the soldiers fighting the LRA. With an officer corps intent on prolonging the conflict for fiduciary reasons, and an enlisted force with little motivation to engage in combat and risk their lives, Museveni found in the military a willing accomplice in keeping the conflict alive.

### **3. Financially Convenient Conflict**

The conflict, while costing the lives of thousands (mostly Acholi), proved exceptionally profitable for the well-connected elite. For those who benefitted, enrichment became a compelling reason to prolong the conflict—even as they strove to portray active combat with the LRA. Such pervasive corruption could only exist in a structure based on patronage, and with the active or passive approval of the country's most senior leaders, further building the case that the government consciously prolonged the conflict. The hypothesis that the insurgency endured due to economic factors is entirely tenable. Of course being able to participate in the benefits of such patronage

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<sup>154</sup> Schomerus, “They Forget What They Came for,” 137.

<sup>155</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 48.

<sup>156</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, “Kony’s Message,” 31; Tripp, *Museveni’s Uganda*, 144.

requires a seat at the table. In an emerging democracy, a conflict can present significant opportunities for those at the top to profit not just financially, but politically.

## **E. POLITICAL BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT HYPOTHESIS**

Yoweri Museveni has maintained his position as president of Uganda since 1987. Prior to 2005, the NRM was the only party permitted under the constitution. Even so, political wrangling and posturing was the norm. The NRM enjoyed its greatest popularity in the center of the country, where many of its principal leaders originated.<sup>157</sup> From the outset, the north proved to be a persistent source of political opposition. In this context, the conflict with the LRA assumes a political aura.

As outlined in Chapter I, a ruling politician might use internal conflict to consolidate political power, to marginalize a politically insignificant group, or to further alienate or fracture an entrenched opposition. This section explains the LRA conflict as a repression of the Acholi and other northern political opponents. Next it considers how the conflict served to maintain military loyalty in a country with a history of military coups d'état. It then explores the electoral benefits Museveni enjoyed thanks to the continued conflict. This further builds the case for Museveni intentionally allowing the LRA and the associated conflict to persist much longer than it would have otherwise.

Despite the conflict in the north, Uganda experienced economic growth, and by the mid-1990s, was leading the region according to most economic growth indicators. Perhaps because of this growth, many within the country, as well as most outside observers, viewed the LRA conflict as a sideshow.<sup>158</sup> When the LRA emerged as an insurgent group, the Museveni government had recently taken control and prevailed over the UPDA and HSM. The new government was now responsible for rebuilding a war-torn country. The government could legitimately argue that other national issues were more important than dealing with a nascent criminal organization in an underpopulated and politically insignificant region. As Museveni derived most of his political support

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<sup>157</sup> Mwenda, “Uganda’s Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict,” 46.

<sup>158</sup> Joshua B. Rubongoja, *Regime Hegemony in Museveni’s Uganda Pax Musevenica* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 185.

from the center of the country, an insurgency confined to the north that terrorized a politically insignificant ethnic group helped him consolidate his political power. In this role, the LRA acted as an accomplice in marginalizing the Acholi.

### **1. Ethnic Marginalization**

Any explanation of the conflict between the central government and the LRA is incomplete without consideration of the centrality of the Acholi as a marginalized group. As previously described, the Acholi dominated the pre and post-Amin military; actively resisted Museveni's NRM; and subsequently supported the UPDA, HSM, and LRA.<sup>159</sup> For their parts, the Acholi came to view the conflict as a government war waged against them, with the LRA in league with the state in destroying the Acholi.<sup>160</sup> Not surprisingly, until the LRA was pushed out of Uganda, the Acholi voted overwhelmingly against Museveni and his party at all levels of government.<sup>161</sup> Because the conflict only affected the north and took such a heavy toll on the Acholi people, many viewed the conflict as intentional.

At the same time, Museveni came to power with the support of the central and western ethnicities, and needed to maintain that support. It makes sense that Museveni would want to prevent the northerners from growing strong enough to challenge the new status-quo. The emergence and persistence of the LRA allowed Museveni to simultaneously satisfy both aims.

Now (2016) approaching 30 years of continuous rule, Museveni has proven extremely adept at not only maintaining his hold on power, but doing so despite increasingly free and fair elections. The conflict with the LRA has aided this maintenance of popular support. Museveni has successfully cast the conflict in regional terms: dangerous northerners who seek to violently return to power at the expense of the peaceful majority.<sup>162</sup> And indeed, the LRA has proven a sufficiently dangerous threat to

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<sup>159</sup> Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 7–15.

<sup>160</sup> Dunn, "Lord's Resistance Army and African International Relations," 50; Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 54.

<sup>161</sup> Van Acker, "The New Order No One Ordered," 337.

<sup>162</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda to the Congo*, 5.

enable Museveni to portray himself as a protector of the Ugandan majority. Museveni further cultivated this image by limiting access to northern areas by NGOs, researchers, and foreign and domestic media.<sup>163</sup> Such tactics minimized negative reporting while allowing Museveni a freer hand in prosecuting the war. To the Ugandan people, Museveni was presented as the only leader capable of protecting Uganda from a northern onslaught.<sup>164</sup>

As long as the LRA continued to operate in the north, Museveni could maintain a disproportionately large part of the UPDF in that area. The presence of troops loyal to Museveni prevented the Acholi and other northern ethnicities from organizing a legitimate opposition. Building the IDP camps in the 2000s served the same purpose. Tight control of the camps prevented northerners from effectively organizing to pose a political threat to the government.<sup>165</sup> The Acholi read of the situation was that Kony was being used as an instrument of the repressive government.<sup>166</sup>

## 2. Military Control

Maintaining control of the military has been an important aspect of Museveni's rule, especially in a country where previous changes of power were by coup d'état. Directing the military against a specific foe allowed Museveni to maintain his esteemed status as the father of the army.<sup>167</sup> The conflict also allowed officers to supplement their income, as previously discussed. This ensured their ongoing loyalty.

In addition the conflict allowed the government to retain budgetary control over the military. This enabled Museveni to maintain higher troop levels than would have been internationally acceptable in peacetime. As we have seen, the conflict with the LRA also justified what ultimately became a fivefold increase in military spending. With this, too,

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<sup>163</sup> Fisher, "Framing Kony," 697.

<sup>164</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda to the Congo*, 9.

<sup>165</sup> Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," 139.

<sup>166</sup> Jackson, "Greed Or Grievance in Northern Uganda," 50.

<sup>167</sup> Izama and Wilkerson, "Uganda: Museveni's Triumph and Weakness," 68.

Museveni purchased the political loyalty of his military officers and keep a lot of soldiers employed.<sup>168</sup>

### **3. Electoral Motivations**

From the outset, Museveni consistently framed the conflict as regional in nature: us versus them. This categorization transferred to Museveni's electoral strategy. As Van Acker explains, Museveni employed a divide-and-rule strategy, promoting the image of "internal outsiders" in order to marginalize opponents.<sup>169</sup> Continued conflict in the north assisted him in doing this; Museveni and the NRM protected the center and prevented the recurrence of northern atrocities. Museveni did not need the support of northerners or Acholi for electoral success. Instead, conflict with the marginalized ethnic group served to rally the center to his government.

Museveni was also able to use the conflict to imply that other presidential candidates would fail to maintain a sufficiently hardline approach against a violent and dangerous LRA—only Museveni would be able to protect the people and confine the conflict to the distant north. However, the ruling party used even more aggressive tactics. For instance he imprisoned some opponents, to include perennial presidential opposition candidate Kizza Besigye.<sup>170</sup> Opponents were often spuriously charged with collaborating with the LRA. The conflict was also occasionally used as an excuse to curb civil liberties and silence opposing voices while outwardly depicting his regime as a liberal democracy.<sup>171</sup> Interestingly, the presidential election of 2011, with the LRA largely defeated and a well organized opposition gaining popularity, Museveni had to spend millions from the federal budget to maintain his seat—making the election the most costly single event in the history of the country.<sup>172</sup> Without a conflict to leverage, reelection apparently became much more difficult.

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<sup>168</sup> Mwenda, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict," 51.

<sup>169</sup> Mwenda, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict," 51.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Izama and Wilkerson, "Uganda: Museveni's Triumph and Weakness," 68.

#### **4. Political Conflict**

Museveni drew substantial political benefit from the two decades-long war with the LRA. Early on the conflict helped him consolidate power and retain military support. Later, the conflict served as justification for increased military spending, tighter controls on personal freedoms, suppression of northern oppression, and as insurance against growing electoral opposition. Because, Museveni's political constituents maintained a largely negative view of northerners, the conflict also provided a convenient excuse for preventing northerners' return to the center of power. As Museveni's tenure lengthened alongside that of the conflict, the LRA proved extremely helpful to him as he balanced political control with elections. His willingness to hold increasingly free and fair elections has ensured continued foreign aid that in turn has protected the patronage networks Museveni has needed to retain his political and military support. The relatively small LRA was probably the most effective political tool Museveni could wield to maintain his power.

#### **F. CONCLUSION**

When confronting the question of why the LRA conflict has endured for so long, Van Acker proposes three possibilities. "Either the LRA is strong...Or the UPDF is weak...Or the war in the north is a façade for other goings on."<sup>173</sup> This chapter has consequently considered all three: the "strong LRA" hypothesis, "under resourced Uganda" hypothesis, and the economic and political rationale for continued conflict. While a cogent argument can be made in support of each hypothesis, Van Acker's "other goings on" holds the strongest explanatory power.

The LRA benefitted early on from a marginalized and alienated Acholi population eager to fight for its return to prominence. When the relationship between the LRA and the Acholi soured, the LRA managed to procure patronage from Sudan to support their operations. However, this support was never adequate to turn the LRA into a legitimate threat to the central government. Meanwhile, the Ugandan government, although weakened by corruption, poor military leadership, and low morale among the rank and

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<sup>173</sup> Van Acker, "The New Order No One Ordered," 352.

file, was always capable of engaging the LRA and had multiple opportunities to put an end to the conflict. The Ugandan military further benefited from yearly budgetary increases and international support. Finally, and most significantly, a myriad of other political and economic clues suggest that the perpetuation of the conflict might have been intentional.

On multiple occasions, a consistent application of force, likely could have eliminated the LRA. The government often pressed under-resourced troops into battle with the best and strongest units held in reserve. It inexplicably halted campaigns on the verge of success, and tacitly tolerated rampant corruption. Officers and government officials alike profited from the conflict through the utilization of “ghost soldiers,” corrupt acquisition deals, and outright looting and smuggling. Museveni also partially benefited from the continued repression and marginalization of the Acholi people who never supported his regime.

While Kony and his small coterie of senior leaders and devoted followers continue to terrorize parts of the DRC and the Central African Republic, northern Uganda has enjoyed relative peace since the late 2000s. Peace should not have taken so long to come to northern Uganda. But today, northern cities are flourishing. Gulu, once at the center of the conflict zone, has been the fastest growing city in Uganda for much of the past decade while the newly constructed hospital in nearby Lira is on par with any in the capital.<sup>174</sup> For all intents and purposes, the insurgency that persisted in the country for over 20 years has all but concluded. Meanwhile, as the door was closing on the LRA in the early 2000s, Boko Haram began its reign of terror in northern Nigeria. Why has an oil rich Nigeria been equally unable to deal with a perpetually violent insurgency?

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<sup>174</sup> Izama and Wilkerson, “Uganda: Museveni’s Triumph and Weakness,” 72.

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### III. NIGERIA AND BOKO HARAM

Early in 2015, with an election mere months away, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan seemed to recognize that he faced a tenuous prospect at reelection. The violent insurgency that had ravaged the north of the country since 2003 was responsible for over 6,300 civilian deaths in 2014 alone.<sup>175</sup> Boko Haram had progressed from random terrorist acts and had successfully held territory across northeastern Nigeria. The Nigerian security forces had been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to counter Boko Haram's territorial gains. With presidential elections scheduled for March, President Jonathan realized that despite the advantages of incumbency, his reelection prospects were dim largely due to the abysmal situation in the north.

The Independent Electoral Commission decided to postpone the election by six weeks. This delay was meant to enhance the security provisions for voters, especially in light of Boko Haram threats to violently disrupt the election.<sup>176</sup> During the pause, the administration organized and launched a concerted military assault on Boko Haram, perhaps the first focused operation against Boko Haram in its 12-year reign of violence. With the help of mercenaries and forces from Chad and Niger, the Nigerian security forces cleared territory held by Boko Haram and reestablished government control in an area roughly the size of Belgium.<sup>177</sup> Nearly 30 million turned out to vote in the election including large numbers in the areas most affected by Boko Haram.<sup>178</sup> The gains against Boko Haram proved to be too little-too late for President Jonathan; however, as the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari easily won the election.<sup>179</sup> Although

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<sup>175</sup> “Boko Haram Violence Leaves Nigeria with Highest Civilian Death Toll in African War Zones,” The Guardian, January 23, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/23/boko-haram-nigeria-civilian-death-toll-highest-acled-african-war-zones>

<sup>176</sup> Martin Ewi, “Was the Nigerian 2015 Presidential Election a Victory for Boko Haram Or for Democracy?” *African Security Review* 24, no. 2 (2015), 222.

<sup>177</sup> Matthew Blood, “Nigeria’s Critical Juncture: Boko Haram, Buhari, and the Future of the Fourth Republic,” *Small Wars Journal* (May, 23, 2015), 1.

<sup>178</sup> Ewi, “Victory for Boko Haram Or for Democracy?” 208.

<sup>179</sup> Peter Lewis and Darren Kew, “Nigeria’s Hopeful Election,” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 3 (2015), 104–105.

weakened, Boko Haram continues to be a difficult problem for even a more resolute Buhari administration to handle.

Why did President Jonathan wait until the last six weeks before the election to finally launch a decisive campaign against Boko Haram? How has the largest country in Africa (in terms of GDP and population) allowed the world's most deadly insurgency to grow and persist within its borders?<sup>180</sup> Is this persistence explained by a disproportionately strong insurgency, an unexpectedly under-resourced state, or by some other economic or political reason?

The case of Nigeria's response to Boko Haram is particularly enlightening by virtue of the country's oil wealth and relatively robust economy. The country's military had been viewed as among the most capable on the continent and a regular contributor to ECOWAS and UN missions.<sup>181</sup> In spite of these indications of state strength, Boko Haram has persisted for over a decade. Similar to Uganda's experience, the insurgency in Nigeria has persisted because of the economic and political benefits gained by Nigeria's elite. To demonstrate this thesis, this chapter begins by outlining the history of the conflict, the growth of Boko Haram and the government's response to the threat. It then analyzes whether the insurgency's persistence can be explained by its relative strength or by the government's relative weakness. Finally, the chapter demonstrates the economic and political explanations for Boko Haram's persistence.

#### A. HISTORY OF NIGERIA/BOKO HARAM CONFLICT

In its current form, most date the birth of Boko Haram to around 2002 or 2003. In this guise, it was the product of a young Muslim extremist named Mohammad Yusuf. Boko Haram's true roots, however, reach much further back in time, predating British colonization. This section begins by briefly summarizing the history of extremism in Nigeria. It then traces the roots of Boko Haram to the Maitatsine uprisings in the early

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<sup>180</sup> Dionne Searcey and Marc Santora, "Boko Haram Ranked Ahead of ISIS for Deadliest Terror Group," *New York Times* Nov 19, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/africa/boko-haram-ranked-ahead-of-isis-for-deadliest-terror-group.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/africa/boko-haram-ranked-ahead-of-isis-for-deadliest-terror-group.html?_r=1).

<sup>181</sup> Jeffrey Julum and Daniel Evans, "Exploring Networks Competing for Influence: Kano State, Nigeria," *Small Wars Journal* (2015), 5.

1980s. The section then looks more closely at the birth of Boko Haram in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and its turn to violence around 2003. Finally, the section charts the extreme violence that began in 2009 and continued through the administration of President Jonathan.

### **1. Pre-Independence Roots of Extremism**

The first major turn of the region toward religious renewal or fundamental Islam began under the influence of Uthman Dan Fodio in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Seeking preeminence over the ruling Emirs, Dan Fodio conquered much of modern day northern Nigeria by 1810.<sup>182</sup> The resulting kingdom was reorganized as the Sokoto Caliphate, governed by Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio and his descendants who became Sultans. The caliphate cemented a close association between religious and political rule in the region.<sup>183</sup> This new government also brought education and Islamic teaching to the people, previously a privilege of the elite.<sup>184</sup> Sokoto rule entrenched a strict religious education that contrasted with the secular education that would arrive with the colonial and independent Nigerian state.

The British Empire established its foothold in the region at Lagos early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British extended their rule up the Niger river into the Muslim region beginning in 1894.<sup>185</sup> As British power in the region increased, the Sokoto Caliphate's power declined. The sultan was killed in battle with British troops in 1903, cementing British rule of the region.<sup>186</sup> Local emirs, eager to maintain their power, aligned themselves with the victorious British, distancing themselves from the will of the

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<sup>182</sup> Al-Bili, Uthman Sayyid Ahmad Ismail, *Some Aspects of Islam in Africa* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2008), 50.

<sup>183</sup> Daniel Agbiboa, "The Ongoing Campaign of Terror in Nigeria: Boko Haram versus the State," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 3 (2013), 2.

<sup>184</sup> Al-Bili, Uthman Sayyid Ahmad Ismail, *Some Aspects of Islam in Africa*, 52–53.

<sup>185</sup> Mike Smith, *Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2015), 40–41.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

people.<sup>187</sup> The seat of power, however, transferred from the Caliph to the governor of the northern Nigeria colony.

Consistent with indirect rule, the British governor of northern Nigeria respected the wishes of the Muslim emirs and prevented Christian missionaries from establishing schools and churches. The banning of Christian-supported schools in the north had the unintended consequence of leaving the north with its own Islamic schools in contrast to widespread western education of the south. Southern mission schools were eventually responsible for educating an entire generation of Nigerian leaders.<sup>188</sup> This education gap filled the colonial civil service with southerners, while northerners held less than 1% of these positions at independence.<sup>189</sup> As Ekeh argues, those who were able to attain a western education were at a distinct advantage in colonial and post-colonial states.<sup>190</sup> Further economically distancing the north from the south, oil discoveries in the Niger River delta late in the colonial period assured a southern bias in industrial development.<sup>191</sup> By virtue of the decisions of British colonial leaders and those of the northern emirs, the more densely populated Muslim north economically developed at a much slower pace.

Fundamentalist ideologies in the spirit of Dan Fodio's jihad endured in such economically alienating conditions. During the colonial period numerous violent uprisings of fundamental Islamists were brutally put down by British-led forces at the request of threatened local emirs.<sup>192</sup> Simultaneously, calls for independence throughout Nigeria grew louder through the 1950s. Independence parties sprang up throughout the northern region calling for freedom and equality, in opposition to not only the British, but

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<sup>187</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), 652.

<sup>188</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 60.

<sup>189</sup> Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 77.

<sup>190</sup> Peter P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 01 (1975), 99.

<sup>191</sup> Augustine Ikelegbe, "The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005), 214.

<sup>192</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 51.

also their vassals, the emirs.<sup>193</sup> Nigerian elites drew up colonial constitutions in the early 1950s and divided political power equitably by region and population. This had the consequence of over representing the more densely populated north over the more educated but sparsely populated south.<sup>194</sup> At independence, the dominance of southerners in the civil service stood in contrast to the north's majority in parliament. To balance the power at the top, a federal system established a rotation between north and south at the most senior levels of government.<sup>195</sup> Regional and ethnic distrust coupled with economic inequality (both regionally and between elites and peasants) assured a difficult path for an independent Nigeria.

## 2. Post-Independence Extremism

Independent Nigeria experienced substantial turbulence during its first few decades, enduring a civil war and military rule interspersed with brief periods of democratic governance. The north continued to be economically repressed in comparison to the south. Meanwhile, extremist ideologies continued to make inroads among the underprivileged northern population. Wahhabi-Salafist clerics, financed out of the Arabian Peninsula, found fertile ground for an extremist ideology.<sup>196</sup> Fundamentalist clerics have preached their intolerant and violent variations of the religion in Northern Nigeria and their teachings have maintained a small but significant following throughout the period. However, it is from the late 1970s and into the Maitatsine rebellions of the early 1980s, that Boko Haram can trace its earliest manifestations.

Generally, the state security apparatus was at a loss as to how to deal with extremist movements. Extremist preachers were arrested and subsequently released, gatherings were inconsistently broken up, and authorities failed to confront even armed groups. Mohammad Marwa, the founder and inspiration of the subsequent Maitatsine uprisings, exemplified this government ambivalence; he was repeatedly arrested in the

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<sup>193</sup> Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 109.

<sup>194</sup> Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, 77.

<sup>195</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 64–65.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

1970s, but his group was never formally charged nor broken up despite the group's increasingly violent tendencies.<sup>197</sup> At the time, Marwa's group was one of many preaching a violent ideology.

Similar to earlier and later fundamentalist movements, Marwa preached a return to the so-called Islam of the prophet. He derided contemporary culture, education, and the secular state that imposed it—to include the Islamic leadership that colluded with the government.<sup>198</sup> Between 1975 and 1980, Marwa's group grew from approximately 2,000 followers to roughly 10,000, comprising a formidable force for ill-prepared national police forces.<sup>199</sup> A government crackdown in 1981 launched the initial violence in Kano state, in which approximately 4,000 people died, including Marwa. Thousands of other followers were imprisoned.<sup>200</sup>

Indicating the government's inability to comprehend and subdue the movement, over 1,000 of Marwa's followers were released from prison in 1982. These newly released radicalized Islamists quickly reignited the conflict and launched rebellions throughout northern Nigeria through 1985.<sup>201</sup> The police and government's inability to address the rebellion and its underlying causes led Hickey to predict, at the time, that "Nigeria will be under the shadow of *Maitatsine* for some time to come."<sup>202</sup> In total, by 1985 the Maitatsine rebellions would claim more than 10,000 lives, motivate a tenfold increase in the size of the national police force, and sow additional seeds of fundamental extremist ideology throughout northern Nigeria.

The Maitatsine uprisings demonstrated the allure of a violent extremist ideology in an economically repressed area. It also showcased the relative inability of the Nigerian state to counter a modestly sized rebellion. 10,000 insurgent combatants among a

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<sup>197</sup> Iro Aghedo, "Old Wine in a New Bottle: Ideological and Operational Linkages between Maitatsine and Boko Haram Revolts in Nigeria," *African Security* 7, no. 4 (2014), 234.

<sup>198</sup> Raymond Hickey, "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note," *African Affairs* 83, no. 331 (1984), 254.

<sup>199</sup> Aghedo, "Old Wine in a New Bottle," 234.

<sup>200</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 75.

<sup>201</sup> Aghedo, "Old Wine in a New Bottle," 235.

<sup>202</sup> Hickey, "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria," 255.

population of millions should have been defeated by a determined military and police force, especially given the concentrated attacks by the Maitatsine rebels. Although uprisings of the same scale as Maitatsine diminished until the rise of Boko Haram, the underlying causes of the movement persisted. Boko Haram bears much in common with its predecessor, largely due to the inability of the government to address these underlying causes.

### **3. Persistent Extremism**

The late 1980s and 1990s continued to see numerous violent movements arise in the economically repressed north of Nigeria. Oil wealth and investment in the southwest of the country turned Lagos into a vast metropolis, while the government constructed a showcase new capital at Abuja in the center of the country. This oil revenue also entrenched rampant corruption, leaving little left over for development in the rest of the country. In this environment, successor groups to Marwa's, as well as less ideologically motivated criminal groups, continued to plague the underdeveloped north.

During this period, Nigeria was ruled by a series of military dictators, coming to power through successive coups. The generally more conservative and Islamic north had repeatedly called for the institution of sharia, or Islamic law, in the northern states. Allowances for this form of law existed in the previous 1978 constitution.<sup>203</sup> Consequently, northern elites were able to retain control in their areas, while also demonstrating to the people their shared devotion to religion. When the ruling generals agreed to a new constitution and democratic elections in 1999, northern leaders quickly renewed their call for sharia law in the northern states. Most northern states subsequently instituted sharia law, enacting a dual legal system where sharia runs concurrently with secular law.<sup>204</sup>

Despite this seeming success for Islamist practice, the actual application of sharia has not satisfied the demands of fundamentalists. Northern authorities have applied sharia

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<sup>203</sup> Aghedo, "Old Wine in a New Bottle," 237.

<sup>204</sup> Abimbola O. Adesoji, "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State," *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011), 110.

in a lenient form, without the beheadings and amputations undertaken elsewhere.<sup>205</sup> This relatively limited application of sharia also falls significantly short of that advocated by fundamentalist and extremist teachers. This form of sharia has allowed the extremist groups to target the elite and moderate practitioners of the faith as much as, if not more than, Christians and government officials.<sup>206</sup> The government never directly confronted the extremist undercurrents pervading the north.

#### **4. The Birth of Boko Haram**

Boko Haram's founding is generally attributed to Mohammad Yusuf, a high school drop-out from Maiduguri, Borno state. He was born in 1970, and received his initial Islamic education in Niger and Chad, before returning to Nigeria and becoming associated with a series of extremist groups. Most histories of the group place Yusuf under the tutelage of a cleric named Lawan Abubakar around 1995, who led a group known as Sahaba or Shabaab.<sup>207</sup> Lawan's group is generally considered to be the precursor of Boko Haram. Yusuf, however, was more radical than his teacher. In the early 2000s when Lawan left for further study in Saudi Arabia, Yusuf took control of the group and began to preach his interpretation of Islam.<sup>208</sup> Yusuf's ideology rejected western culture, education, and science, and espoused violence against any system that fell short of his interpretation of Islamic law.<sup>209</sup> Prior to 2005 the group was known as Shabaab, the Nigerian Taliban, and Yusufiyyah, but subsequently came to be popularly identified as Boko Haram—referring to Yusuf's rejection of western education and culture. Yusuf's group gained many followers, and his influence reached much further than his mosque in Maiduguri.

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<sup>205</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 76.

<sup>206</sup> *After the Election: Fundamental Security Challenges Nigeria must Face* (Washington, DC: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, July 2015), 16.

<sup>207</sup> Freedom C. Onuoha, "Boko Haram and the Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security, and the State in Nigeria*, ed. Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos (Leiden, Netherlands: African Studies Centre, 2014), 159; Jideofor Adibe, "What do we Really Know about Boko Haram?" in *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*, ed. Ioannis Mantzikos (Bristol, UK: e-International Relations, 2013), 11.

<sup>208</sup> Adibe, "What do we really Know about Boko Haram?" 11.

<sup>209</sup> Abee Salaam, "The Psychological Make-Up of Muhammad Yusuf," in *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*, ed. Ioannis Mantzikos (Bristol, U.K.: e-International Relations, 2014), 47–49.

In 2003 the group began to be associated with violence to match its ideology. In December 2003, a small group of Yusuf's disciples came into conflict with local residents, resulting in a violent four-day clash with police.<sup>210</sup> The attacks and violence would continue sporadically during the next few years throughout northern Nigeria, police stations being the target of choice. The government did not attribute such low levels of violence to a legitimate insurgency, and federal authorities pursued little more than basic police action. Meanwhile Yusuf's group continued to grow. By 2009, several state, local, and Islamic leaders recognized the subversive nature of Yusuf's teaching, and monitored local groupings of Boko Haram members. Bauchi state formally restricted them from public preaching and recruitment.<sup>211</sup> These restrictions and low level confrontations with police culminated in a major clash during the last week of July 2009—initiating the international prominence of Boko Haram.

Although reports as to exactly what happened differ, a general consensus exists that the opening round of violence occurred as a sizeable number of Yusuf's disciples were on their way to a funeral for a group member. Local police stopped the group for a minor traffic violation and a skirmish broke out. Some police officers were shot, while some in the group were killed.<sup>212</sup> Word quickly spread, fanned by public comments by Yusuf, leading to skirmishes at police outposts across Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Kano states. Police surrounded Yusuf's mosque in Maiduguri, and subsequently destroyed it.<sup>213</sup> The military was called in to help settle the unrest. The police arrested hundreds, with numerous reports of forced interrogations and extrajudicial killings.<sup>214</sup> After five days, military forces found Yusuf and handed him over to the police. There is almost universal agreement that Yusuf was intentionally executed, although the police asserted that he was

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<sup>210</sup> Andrew Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012).

<sup>211</sup> Lysias Dodd Gilbert, "Prolongation of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: The International Dimensions," *Research on Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 11 (2014), 151.

<sup>212</sup> Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?* 4.

<sup>213</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 97.

<sup>214</sup> Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah, "The Boko Haram Uprising: How Should Nigeria Respond," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 5 (2012), 865–866.

killed while trying to escape.<sup>215</sup> Although Yusuf's death put an end to the July 2009 uprising, the brutality inflicted by the police cemented Boko Haram's resolve to counter such action, and also likely enhanced the group's ability to recruit among the underprivileged of northern Nigeria.<sup>216</sup> Approximately 700 members of Boko Haram were killed during that week in July 2009.<sup>217</sup>

This uprising is considered Boko Haram's "coming out." It could no longer be dismissed as a low level criminal organization. It proved its ability to organize, train, equip, and mobilize fighters in coordinated attacks across four northern states in a relatively short span. The group publicized its intent to overthrow the government, reconstruct a caliphate, and institute sharia based on a strict and selective interpretation of Islam. The government now had the responsibility to prosecute a COIN campaign to counter and put an end to the insurgency.

## 5. Political Environment and Government Reaction

While Boko Haram was growing, the Nigerian government was a flawed and corrupt democracy. In the country's transition to civilian democratic rule in 1999, former military dictator and Christian southerner Olusegun Obasanjo was elected president from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He was re-elected in 2003. In the 2007 election, northern Muslim Umaru Yar'Adua represented the party, and won against a fractured opposition. In 2010 Vice President Goodluck Jonathan took office following the death of Yar'Adua.<sup>218</sup> A southerner, Jonathan won the party's nomination and 2011 election. Many northerners, both within and without the PDP, felt slighted that a southerner took power when much of the country felt power should rotate to a northerner.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?* 4.

<sup>216</sup> Hussein Solomon, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria: Responding to Boko Haram," *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 4 (2012), 7.

<sup>217</sup> Lauren Ploch Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," *Current Politics and Economics of Africa* 7, no. 2 (2014), 144.

<sup>218</sup> *After the Election*, 10.

<sup>219</sup> Okolo Ben Simon, "2015 and the Survival of the Nigerian State," *African Security Review* 23, no. 2 (2014), 165.

While the insurgency sprang up in 2003, little evidence indicates that the Obasanjo administration viewed it as any more significant than any other criminal organization. Perhaps due to his experience and understanding of the socio-economic conditions prevalent in the north, Yar’Adua’s administration took the threat more seriously. In 2007, Yar’Adua ordered the security establishment to contain the violence and deal with the growing threat.<sup>220</sup> As a result of the massive week-long regional uprising in July 2009, the president approved the stand up of a joint task force to address the insurgency.<sup>221</sup> Yar’Adua’s appreciation of the threat, and how he would have subsequently addressed it, remains a matter of speculation, as by late 2009 illness sent him out of the country for treatment and Jonathan became acting president.

## **6. Early Boko Haram Actions**

Following the uprising of 2009 and Yusuf’s death, Boko Haram seemingly dispersed and went underground.<sup>222</sup> By mid-2010, suspicions of Boko Haram’s persistence reemerged as one of Yusuf’s lieutenants, Abubakar Shekau, announced himself, the group, and their aims of dismantling the Nigerian state on YouTube, and followed the announcement up with terrorist attacks. That year a group of Boko Haram fighters attacked a prison in Bauchi state and released approximately 700 prisoners, many of whom were suspected group members. Attacks on police outposts and prisons continued through 2010 and 2011, with churches, Christians, and moderate Muslims added to the list of legitimate targets.<sup>223</sup>

The scope of the conflict grew in 2011 as Boko Haram targets extended beyond the northeastern states. Early that year, Jonathan ran for and won election. Shekau vocally and violently opposed his candidature, and the group targeted sites associated with the

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<sup>220</sup> Aghedo and Osumah, “Boko Haram Uprising,” 865.

<sup>221</sup> Osumah Oarhe, “Responses of the Nigerian Defense and Intelligence Establishments to the Challenge of Boko Haram,” in *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis*, ed. Ioannis Mantzikos (Bristol, U.K.: e-International Relations, 2013), 66.

<sup>222</sup> Freedom C. Onuoha, “The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram Crisis Explained,” *African Security Review* 19, no. 2 (2010), 65.

<sup>223</sup> Benjamin Maiangwa et al., “Baptism by Fire: Boko Haram and the Reign of Terror in Nigeria,” *Africa Today* 59 (Winter 2012), 47.

election—to include an attack very close to Jonathan’s inauguration ceremony.<sup>224</sup> Subsequently, in August 2011, a suicide bomber drove a car bomb into the lobby of the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja, killing 21 people and injuring many more.<sup>225</sup> Two months previous, a similar suicide attack occurred at the National Police Headquarters, also in Abuja.<sup>226</sup>

These attacks were significant for two reasons. First, these were the first Boko Haram attacks outside of northern Nigeria, suggesting an ability to extend the organization’s reach beyond its immediate power base. Second, these attacks were suspected to be the first employment of suicide bombers in Nigeria. Although this tactic is common elsewhere, it was believed to be incompatible with Nigerian values. These attacks suggested the growing influence of outside extremist groups who more routinely employ such tactics.<sup>227</sup> Since this attack, Boko Haram attacks have occurred at least weekly throughout the country, with schools targeted as well. While such attacks killed many, the threat also discouraged thousands of children from attending school, potentially impacting future prosperity.<sup>228</sup> By mid-2011, Boko Haram was clearly a serious insurgency, terrorizing vast areas of northern Nigeria, projecting violence beyond the region, and threatening the ability of the government to govern.

## 7. Jonathan Administration

In June 2011, newly elected President Jonathan ordered the creation of a military-led joint task force (JTF) to counter Boko Haram. Prior to this, the police had maintained the lead in combatting the threat. The JTF sent thousands of troops to the area and enforced curfews, searches, and border closures, but meeting little success in curbing violence.<sup>229</sup> By this time Boko Haram had grown sufficiently strong to counter most

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<sup>224</sup> Ewi, “Victory for Boko Haram or for Democracy?” 220.

<sup>225</sup> Adibe, “What do we Really Know about Boko Haram?” 10.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> James J. Forest, *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria* (Tampa Bay, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2012), 80.

<sup>228</sup> Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?* 6.

<sup>229</sup> Solomon, “Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria,” 7.

routine government action. Despite a general lack of local support and a numerically sizeable COIN force, the group was still able to maintain freedom of action, ramping up the level of violent attacks year over year. By the middle of 2012 it was successfully holding terrain, extracting resources, and governing numerous towns.<sup>230</sup> While security forces met with occasional successes, Boko Haram continued to prove adept at dispersing, regrouping, and growing, in spite of government action.

In May 2013, Jonathan declared a six-month state of emergency, which was subsequently extended through 2014. This brought the central government in direct control of northern operations and reorganized the command structure under a single military division that reported directly to the Chief of Defense.<sup>231</sup> The defense budget also grew massively during this period, from roughly \$625 million in 2010 to \$6.25 billion in 2012–2014—a ten-fold increase.<sup>232</sup> Despite the reorganizations, strategic focus, troop deployments, and budget increases, however, the government never gained the upper hand. Boko Haram continued to operate at will, taking-and-holding territory, and terrorizing the population. The group collected taxes, food, weapons, and any other useful resources, leaving the already poor residents destitute.<sup>233</sup>

Headlining worldwide news in April 2014 was the night-time abduction of approximately 200 teenage girls from a boarding school in Chibok, Borno state. The day and week after the attack parents and local officials investigated the remains of the school and searched for the children, but were unsuccessful. Government forces were typically slow to respond.<sup>234</sup> Within weeks the international press picked up the story and the Twitter hashtag #BringBackOurGirls spread worldwide. This international attention to the conflict won support from donors and foreign governments to assist in finding the

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<sup>230</sup> Agbiba, “Ongoing Campaign of Terror in Nigeria,” 2.

<sup>231</sup> John Campbell, *U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria’s Boko Haram*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2014), 13.

<sup>232</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* (Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2014).

<sup>233</sup> Amnesty International, *Our Job Is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill: Boko Haram’s Reign of Terror in North-East Nigeria* (London: Amnesty International, 2015), 15.

<sup>234</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria’s Unholy War*, 180.

girls.<sup>235</sup> The international attention also forced the Jonathan administration to increase its efforts to find the girls and combat Boko Haram. In response, more troops deployed to the region.<sup>236</sup> Despite concerted international efforts, the girls have not been found, and most analysts believe they have been given to Boko Haram fighters as wives and spread throughout the vast operating area or have been killed in the ongoing violence.

The kidnapping also drove Nigeria to reengage with neighbors Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to take a regional approach to combatting the insurgency.<sup>237</sup> The governments formed a multi-national task force in early 2015 headquartered in N'Djamena, Chad, led by a Nigerian general, and funded principally by Nigeria and foreign donors.<sup>238</sup> The multinational efforts have met significant success in curbing Boko Haram's cross-border access. Chadian and Nigerien troops have met significant success in routing Boko Haram—to the extent that their success further demonstrated Nigeria's inability to deal with a far-from-invincible Boko Haram.<sup>239</sup>

Boko Haram's rapid and violent growth marked Goodluck Jonathan's presidency. As his first term was drawing to a close, Jonathan realized the ongoing conflict was hurting his chances of reelection. Violent episodes such as the kidnapping of the Chibok girls elevated the publicity of the conflict well beyond the confines of northern Nigeria, to the extent that previously loyal southerners questioned his leadership. Year over year, death totals increased, to the point that in 2014 and 2015 Boko Haram was responsible for more deaths than the much more publicly visible ISIS.<sup>240</sup> In response, the highly successful combined military push in the Spring of 2015, outlined in the opening to this chapter, routed Boko Haram from the towns and villages it claimed for its caliphate. The

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<sup>235</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 180.

<sup>236</sup> Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 152.

<sup>237</sup> *After the Election*, 14.

<sup>238</sup> Andrew McGregor, "Conflict at a Crossroads: Can Nigeria Sustain its Military Campaign Against Boko Haram," *Terrorism Monitor*, sec. 13, June 26, 2015.

<sup>239</sup> Yan St. Pierre, "Re-Enforcing Radicalisation with Bad PR? The Nigerian Army's Handling of Boko Haram," *Journal for Deradicalization* no. 4 (Fall 2015), 62.

<sup>240</sup> "Boko Haram Violence Leaves Nigeria with Highest Civilian Death Toll in African War Zones," The Guardian, January 23, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/23/boko-haram-nigeria-civilian-death-toll-highest-acled-african-war-zones>.

campaign dispersed the group to such an extent that the election was successfully held with less violence than in 2011.<sup>241</sup> The brief six-week military operation was the most successful to date, retaking areas that in some cases Boko Haram had held for nearly six years.<sup>242</sup> As a method to secure re-election, the effort was unsuccessful as Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim, defeated Jonathan.

## **8. Buhari Administration**

Buhari was the presidential candidate of the newly formed All Progressives Congress (APC). He benefitted from his regional and religious background, but also possessed an unimpeachable anti-corruption record and the ability to rally the disparate voices of various opposition parties. Buhari profited from elite defections from the PDP and easily won the northern Muslim states, but also succeeded in securing three Christian majority states. In the official tally, Buhari defeated Jonathan by 9 percentage points and an outright majority.<sup>243</sup> To his credit, Jonathan peacefully conceded the election, marking the first time an opposition candidate democratically defeated an incumbent in Nigerian history.<sup>244</sup> One of Buhari's first proclamations upon inauguration was that the Nigerian security forces would defeat Boko Haram by the end of the year—a bold promise to a Nigerian public who had become skeptical of such past assertions.<sup>245</sup>

Although the spring 2015 campaign had been successful in retaking Boko Haram held territory, the operation had killed relatively few insurgent fighters. The group followed the more traditional guerrilla tactic of falling back and dispersing, instead of giving-up casualties against a conventional force. This left the majority of Boko Haram's cells intact, allowing them to regroup.<sup>246</sup> As Buhari assumed control of the government,

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<sup>241</sup> Yossef Bodansky, “The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date,” *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, no. 341 (April 2015), 5.

<sup>242</sup> Blood, “Nigeria’s Critical Juncture,” 1.

<sup>243</sup> *After the Election*, 103–105.

<sup>244</sup> Lewis and Kew, “Nigeria’s Hopeful Election,” 104.

<sup>245</sup> Dionne Searcey and Eric Schmitt, “Military Victories Over Boko Haram Mean Little to Nigerians,” *New York Times* Jan 15, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria.html?_r=0).

<sup>246</sup> Bodansky, “The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date,” 6.

he reorganized some aspects of the military and drove a policy of continued engagement in the north. The Nigerian military fortified the liberated towns and continued to put pressure on Boko Haram alongside multi-national troops. Operations in May 2015 focused on Boko Haram hideouts and reportedly liberated around 1,000 women and girls, 90% of whom were pregnant.<sup>247</sup> The continued pressure in 2015 noticeably weakened the group, resulting in estimates that the number of active fighters had been halved from the previous year.<sup>248</sup> This level of success by the government and security forces led Buhari to proclaim at the end of the year that Boko Haram was “technically defeated” despite its continued ability to launch frequent and deadly attacks. He was likely correct, however, when he explained that Boko Haram was no longer able to launch conventional attacks and seize and hold territory as it had for the previous half-decade.<sup>249</sup> Could this conflict have been intentionally prolonged—to the benefit of some—similar to the conflict between the LRA and Uganda?

## B. STRONG INSURGENCY HYPOTHESIS

Boko Haram has been a violent menace to Nigeria and its neighbors since 2009. During this time, the government security forces have pursued the insurgent group, yet have not succeeded in defeating it. This section explores the evidence supporting the hypothesis that Boko Haram is too strong for Nigeria and its allies to deal with. Through an examination of what is known about the group’s internal and external support, financial and materiel support, and safe-havens and territorial support, the chapter comes to the conclusion that it is not sufficiently strong to pose a legitimate threat to a reasonably strong Nigerian state. To support this assertion, this section begins by demonstrating the source of Boko Haram’s personnel support, followed by what is known about the group’s financial inflows. It then examines the group’s territorial

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<sup>247</sup> Yossef Bodansky, “The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date II,” *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, no. 349 (May 2015), 2.

<sup>248</sup> Yossef Bodansky, “The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date III,” *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, no. 368 (August 2015), 3.

<sup>249</sup> Dionne Searcey and Eric Schmitt, “Military Victories Over Boko Haram Mean Little to Nigerians,” *New York Times* Jan 15, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/16/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria.html?_r=0).

advantages, and how they contrast with the distinct lack of popular support for Boko Haram, support that an insurgency requires to be successful.

## 1. Manpower

A strong and persistent insurgency needs people, and needs to be able to continually recruit and replenish its forces. Violent confrontations with the government, arrests, and desertions all take their toll. Few specifics are known about Boko Haram's total numbers. Based on its ideology, it is very possible that tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, subscribe to and support the extremist ideology taught by Yusuf, Shekau, and other associated clerics. Onuoha suggested in 2010 that Yusuf had attracted as many as 280,000 adherents, spread out across 19 Nigerian states and neighboring countries.<sup>250</sup> He was certainly referring to sympathizers rather than active fighters. Nevertheless, this is a sizeable number; it demonstrates the appeal of a message advocating the overthrow of a corrupt regime that has repressed the Muslim north among an impoverished population.

The socioeconomic conditions prevalent in the north have made it relatively easy for an extremist doctrine to take root. In the north, 72% of the population falls below the poverty line; while that statistic is 27% in the south.<sup>251</sup> Rates of public education attendance in the north continue to lag those of the south.<sup>252</sup> An insurgency growing out of impoverishment and neglect is nothing new, and can historically be expected. Boko Haram had little difficulty recruiting in these conditions, despite a lack of support from mainstream Islam and northern elites.

Beyond recruiting, Boko Haram proved particularly adept at spreading out its forces, retaining its leaders, and disengaging when faced with resolute government force. When Boko Haram curtailed its activities after Yusuf's death, it dispersed its followers into groups spread across the country. This allowed it to continue to execute small and disassociated attacks throughout the north, while rendering it more difficult for the

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<sup>250</sup> Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge," 58.

<sup>251</sup> Oarhe, "Responses of the Nigerian Defense and Intelligence Establishments," 69.

<sup>252</sup> Julum and Evans, "Exploring Networks," 6.

government to locate and destroy the group.<sup>253</sup> During much of Boko Haram's most successful period between 2011 and 2014, the government was unsuccessful in eliminating any significant group leaders, indicating a strong ability to protect the central core of its organization.<sup>254</sup> Also the group demonstrated a willingness to attack prisons to release group members, an easy and often repeated tactic for acquiring fighters.<sup>255</sup> When confronted by government forces, the group routinely dispersed, yielding terrain in order to retain the ability to fight another day.<sup>256</sup> Bodansky estimates that the early 2015 campaign succeeded in halving the number of active fighters, yet it still likely maintains 6,000-7,500 trained and equipped fighters around the Nigeria-Cameroon border, with an additional 5,000 further dispersed among the northern population.<sup>257</sup> Taken together, Boko Haram proved particularly adept at retaining the forces it recruited and protecting its leaders. Maintaining sufficient manpower was never a significant issue for the group.

## **2. Financing, Arming, and Training the Insurgency**

The group began ostensibly as a school of Islam under Abubakar and Yusuf. As is common, adherents paid for their instruction. Yusuf did particularly well as an Islamic teacher, and was able to afford many of the western extravagances that he was preaching against.<sup>258</sup> Members paid him monthly dues, providing for his needs, but also for the sect's mosque and eventually the seed money for an insurgency.<sup>259</sup> It is also suspected that Yusuf profited from some elite local benefactors who made sizeable donations.<sup>260</sup> While this early source of revenue was sufficient for maintaining a school of Islam and providing social services to the adherents, it was certainly insufficient to outfit a legitimate insurgency.

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<sup>253</sup> John Campbell, "Nigeria's Battle for Stability," *The National Interest*, no. 118 (2012), 37.

<sup>254</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 32.

<sup>255</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 107.

<sup>256</sup> Bodansky, "The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date," 2.

<sup>257</sup> Bodansky, "The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date III," 3.

<sup>258</sup> Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 57.

<sup>259</sup> Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge," 56; Aghedo and Osumah, "Boko Haram Uprising," 858.

<sup>260</sup> Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge," 56; Smith, *Inside Nigeria's Unholy War*, 87.

The group seemed to have links prior to 2009 to other trans-national extremist organizations. Yusuf himself was arraigned but acquitted on charges of receiving financing from Al Qaeda.<sup>261</sup> Some observers tie donations to wealthy patrons and purported charity groups originating in Gulf countries.<sup>262</sup> These suspected links to other extremist organizations and overseas groups have yet to be definitively proven so it is difficult to speculate and analyze what impact such resources may have had.<sup>263</sup> What is evident, however, is that the group had sufficient resources to fund, train, and equip thousands of fighters prior to July 2009. From 2010 on, banks were targeted as an additional source of funds.<sup>264</sup> It is also suspected that local government leaders resorted to paying off the group in an attempt to prevent attacks in their areas.<sup>265</sup>

As the group began taking and holding territory in 2012, it stripped away every resource available in the occupied territory.<sup>266</sup> The group's rapacious approach was ultimately counterproductive. By early 2016 it was unable to extract additional resources, and resorted to raiding villages for food, perhaps an indication that its former method of resource extraction had run its course.<sup>267</sup> Despite the limited resources at hand, Boko Haram proved itself expert at maximizing resource procurement from an impoverished environment.

Beyond financial resources, the insurgency required a sizeable quantity of weapons. As outlined in the historical portion of the chapter, the group's first attacks in 2003 and 2004 were against police stations—likely as attributable to arms procurement as to retribution. Boko Haram continued this tactic of raiding for weaponry throughout its

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<sup>261</sup> Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge," 57.

<sup>262</sup> Solomon, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria," 8.

<sup>263</sup> Adibe, "What do we Really Know about Boko Haram?" 13.

<sup>264</sup> Agbibo, "Ongoing Campaign of Terror in Nigeria," 7; Campbell, "Nigeria's Battle for Stability," 37.

<sup>265</sup> Daniel Egieba Agbibo, "Why Boko Haram Exists: The Relative Deprivation Perspective," *African Conflict & Peacebuilding Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 149.

<sup>266</sup> Agbibo, "Ongoing Campaign of Terror in Nigeria," 2.

<sup>267</sup> Dionne Searcey, "Boko Haram Falls Victim to a Food Crisis it Created," *The New York Times* March 4, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/05/world/africa/boko-haram-food-crisis.html?smid=tw-share&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/05/world/africa/boko-haram-food-crisis.html?smid=tw-share&_r=1).

period of activity.<sup>268</sup> The group's strong financial resources also enabled the group to directly purchase weapons from corrupt soldiers and officers within the Nigerian military.<sup>269</sup> Raids on police stations and military barracks have likely been the most common avenue for arms and ammo procurement.

While the ideological indoctrination of insurgents came from within, evidence exists that some training of fighters has been facilitated by other terrorist organizations. The bombing of the UN building demonstrated the use of complex explosives and suicide attacks for the first time in Nigeria, indicating a transnational influence.<sup>270</sup> More recently combat against ISIS in Iraq and Syria has unearthed evidence of Boko Haram fighters operating there, gaining training and experience to bring back to Nigeria.<sup>271</sup> While these instances of outside training are likely exceptional, the experience gained abroad can quickly disseminate to fellow fighters, and influence Boko Haram's capability.

### 3. Territory and Safe-Havens

Boko Haram was born in an urban environment among the poor and disenfranchised, while benefitting from elite sponsorship. When the group moved from extremist rhetoric to violence, it found refuge in under-governed areas of northern Nigeria where government enforcement was sparse. The dispersal of ill-equipped government forces enabled a careful Boko Haram to move around and operate, despite a lack of local support.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, while the local populace generally does not support Boko Haram, villagers are often compelled against informing on the group out of fear.<sup>273</sup> This has enabled the group to enjoy an internal safe-haven despite a hostile populace.

Boko Haram's success at taking and holding territory has also enabled it to create its own safe-havens. This territory has allowed for training and reconstitution of the force

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<sup>268</sup> Maiangwa et al., "Baptism by Fire," 47.

<sup>269</sup> Murray Last, "The Pattern of Dissent: Boko Haram in Nigeria 2009," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 10, no. 7 (2009), 10.

<sup>270</sup> Solomon, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria," 8.

<sup>271</sup> Bodansky, "The Islamic State in West Africa—Boko Haram Up-Date III," 2.

<sup>272</sup> Solomon, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria," 9.

<sup>273</sup> Forest, *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*, 91.

in addition to resource extraction from the population.<sup>274</sup> Similarly, Nigeria has long, sparsely populated borders with its northern and eastern neighbors. Niger and Chad have both demonstrated a strong will and determination to discourage Boko Haram activity within their countries. However, the long borders are virtually unenforceable, allowing Boko Haram to come and go at will.<sup>275</sup> Sufficient coordination between the countries to deny cross-border movement and operations only came about following the Chibok kidnapping in 2014.<sup>276</sup> Although Boko Haram has successfully exploited this difficulty, it likely gained more territorial benefit from within Nigeria.

#### **4. Boko Haram's Overall Weakness**

Despite the resource strengths that have enabled Boko Haram to be enormously successful since 2009, it is difficult to attribute its longevity purely to relative strength. The next section illustrates the state's significant resource advantage, further diminishing the credibility of this hypothesis. Most significantly, when the Nigerian government decided to retake Boko Haram held territory, Boko Haram melted away in the face of a determined foe.<sup>277</sup> This military success demonstrated that Nigeria is fully capable of defeating Boko Haram and that Boko Haram is not sufficiently strong to pose a legitimate threat to the state.

#### **C. UNDER-RESOURCED STATE HYPOTHESIS**

If a state is sufficiently strong to counter the efforts of an insurgency, even a strong insurgency would have difficulty maintaining a high level of operations and persist. The state should have, in comparison to the insurgency, significantly greater resources to bring to the fight. As outlined in the previous section, Boko Haram has been able to collect sufficient resources to persist, but likely insufficient to truly threaten the central government. The government of Nigeria, on the other hand, governs the largest

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<sup>274</sup> *After the Election*, 14.

<sup>275</sup> Oarhe, “Responses of the Nigerian Defense and Intelligence Establishments,” 67.

<sup>276</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands* (London: Amnesty International, 2015), 14.

<sup>277</sup> *After the Election*, 21–22.

economy in Africa. It is the largest oil producer on the continent, pumping 2.5 million barrels per day in 2015.<sup>278</sup> These facts alone suggest that if any African country has the means to defeat an insurgency, it is Nigeria.

This section demonstrates the advantages Nigeria possesses in its fight against Boko Haram but also how much of these resources have been wasted or insufficiently applied. To evaluate this hypothesis, this section initially examines the economic data and Nigeria's ranking on the continent. It then looks at available military and police resources, as well as the international aid and security assistance that have been donated to defeat Boko Haram. Finally, the section briefly examines the effects of corruption and its degradation of the security forces dedicated to the Boko Haram fight. While corruption has taken its toll, Nigeria remains sufficiently strong to effectively counter the insurgency.

## **1. Nigeria by the Numbers**

Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa, its number one oil producer, and has the continent's largest population. By one estimate, by 2040, Nigeria will possess one fifth of Africa's economic capability and will continue growing at a phenomenal rate.<sup>279</sup> This rate of growth will also give the country the largest per capita increase in GDP despite any setbacks due to insurgency or corruption. Nigerian per capita GDP has been rapidly growing since before the country's transition to democracy in 1999.<sup>280</sup> Oil is responsible for much of this growth. Sustained high oil prices through the late 2000s helped maintain average growth of 8.5% through 2013.<sup>281</sup> In 2014, with record high oil prices, GDP grew by 10%.<sup>282</sup> Oil accounts for roughly 85% of government revenue, and in 2014 it brought

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<sup>278</sup> “Top 10 Oil Producing Countries in Africa 2015,” Last modified March 18, 2016, <http://www.africaranking.com/top-10-oil-producing-countries-africa/5/>.

<sup>279</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, Julia Schunemann and Jonathan Moyer, *Power and Influence in Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa* (Denver: Institute for Security Studies, 2015), 19.

<sup>280</sup> Cilliers, Schunemann and Moyer, *Power and Influence in Africa*, 19.

<sup>281</sup> Lewis and Kew, “Nigeria’s Hopeful Election,” 97.

<sup>282</sup> “Nigeria GDP at Market Prices (Current US\$),” World Bank, Last modified March 18, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/NG?display=graph>.

in \$88 billion.<sup>283</sup> The drop off in oil prices in 2015 certainly will pose difficulties in the years to come. Nevertheless, during the period in which Boko Haram enjoyed its greatest success and growth, the government amassed vast oil revenue. Inflows of foreign aid and military assistance have been significant; however, in comparison to Nigeria's own ability to generate revenue from oil, they do not represent a proportionally large sum.<sup>284</sup>

The government has spent substantial amounts of money on the security sector and has dramatically increased that funding during the height of the insurgency. The defense budget has been maintained at these levels since then. Despite the budget increased discussed previously, the military was not able to successfully complete the campaign against Boko Haram. This would indicate that resources alone are not definitive. There may be another factor at play, however: corruption. Some analysts suggest that the amount of money stolen is deceptively large, with relatively less going to frontline troops and equipment than would be expected. Of the \$6 billion military budget, around 10% has been spent on weapons and equipment, with the rest going to headquarters and military staffs, or disappearing entirely.<sup>285</sup>

Meanwhile, the national police force has not been funded to the same level. The average police officer is trained and equipped at roughly half the level of a soldier. The police are particularly lacking in intelligence and surveillance training and equipment.<sup>286</sup> The police should have received commensurate budgetary increases alongside the military, as both were fighting the same fight against Boko Haram. In short, despite substantial government resources, and a sizeable military budget, the funds have not been directed to the areas most critical to defeating an insurgency.

## 2. International Assistance

The struggle against Boko Haram has always been international due to the group's cross border activity. Also ethnic, religious, and historical links have existed in

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<sup>283</sup> "Special Report: Nigeria." *The Economist*, June 20, 2015, 12.

<sup>284</sup> Campbell, *U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram*, 14.

<sup>285</sup> *After the Election*, 17.

<sup>286</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 32; Aghedo and Oarhe, "The Boko Haram Uprising," 864.

the border areas that predate national boundaries. Post-independence, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria, united to create the Lake Chad Basin Commission, primarily to regulate and protect water rights in the region, but also to ensure security across the southern Sahel and Lake Chad area.<sup>287</sup> This history of cooperation in the region has since served as a template. Chibok spurred reengagement by the commission, resulting in a multinational joint task force (MNJTF) to facilitate military cooperation.<sup>288</sup> Beyond security, the commission also implemented a \$65 million emergency development initiative to ameliorate the conditions of poverty that contributed to the insurgency.<sup>289</sup> The MNJTF was instrumental in the successful routing of Boko Haram in early 2015. Chadian and Nigerien soldiers were key to the coalition's success.<sup>290</sup> Regional support and cooperation, although likely the most significant to Nigeria's counter-Boko Haram efforts, is not the only outside support Nigeria has received over the course of the conflict. Western support has also contributed.

Nigeria receives roughly \$700 million in various foreign assistance programs from the United States; 87% of which is for health programs.<sup>291</sup> Peacekeeping funding (PKO), foreign military financing (FMF), and anti-terrorism assistance total about \$7-8 million, with much of that amount earmarked for pre-existing programs.<sup>292</sup> In all, about 20 countries have sold or provided Nigeria with military hardware in sufficient quantities to be helpful in combatting Boko Haram.<sup>293</sup> In May 2014, the U.S. deployed an unarmed surveillance drone and 80 personnel to Chad to assist in locating the Chibok girls and to provide additional intelligence on Boko Haram movements.<sup>294</sup> While helpful, most international security assistance to Nigeria has been relatively insignificant, aside from

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<sup>287</sup> "The Lake Chad Basin Commission," Lake Chad Basin Commission, Last modified March 18, 2016. <http://www.cblt.org/en/lake-chad-basin-commission>.

<sup>288</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands*, 12; Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 152.

<sup>289</sup> McGregor, "Conflict at a Crossroads," 10.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.; *After the Election*, 17.

<sup>291</sup> Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 159.

<sup>292</sup> Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 159.

<sup>293</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands*, 12.

<sup>294</sup> Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 154.

the efforts of the MNJTF. Overall, as Campbell argues, Nigeria's financial independence due to its oil revenue renders any foreign assistance minimally significant.<sup>295</sup> This independence also limits the ability of outside actors to leverage change and reduce corruption within Nigeria.

### **3. Effect of Corruption**

Counteracting Nigeria's sizeable resources, corruption has become endemic within Nigeria. The vast oil money has rendered such acts relatively easy and common, and generally expected within the government. Some estimates put the total amount of money stolen from the oil sector during the roughly six year Jonathan administration around \$85 billion (oil exports were valued around \$80 billion in 2014 alone).<sup>296</sup> Despite Nigeria's vast oil wealth, the effects of such corruption robbed the security services of resources that could have been used to fight the insurgents. Simultaneously, a culture that tolerated such acts makes it easy for an insurgent organization to thrive and rail against the evil corruption of the government, facilitating recruitment and nurturing sympathizers.

Even though corruption may be deeply entrenched, the people of Nigeria demonstrated their disgust when it voted for the opposition candidate. Muhammadu Buhari ran on a platform of anti-corruption, and has a proven track record in countering such illicit action.<sup>297</sup> Upon taking office, Buhari replaced all of the military service chiefs, carefully selecting their replacements. This suggests the level of corruption that pervaded the military as well as the oil sector. Some of this corruption was overt. The military provided substantial benefits to officers and headquarters, leaving most soldiers underpaid and underequipped.<sup>298</sup> Such a culture of entitlement in the officer corps does not lend itself to battlefield determination. As late as 2013, only 5,600 troops were deployed to northern Nigeria, and a general officer was not deployed until the stand-up of

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<sup>295</sup> Campbell, *U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>296</sup> Stephanie Burchard, "Paying the Price for Public Corruption in Nigeria," *Africa Watch* 9 (July 2015).

<sup>297</sup> Lewis and Kew, "Nigeria's Hopeful Election," 107.

<sup>298</sup> *After the Election*, 17.

the 7<sup>th</sup> division in Borno state in August of that year.<sup>299</sup> Beyond overt corruption, poorly compensated soldiers subsist on petty corruption. The suicide bomber of the UN building in Abuja allegedly paid bribes along his route through checkpoints to the capital to execute his mission.<sup>300</sup> Continued high-level corruption during the Jonathan administration continued to leech resources from all levels of the national and military budgets.

#### **4. Nigeria's Overall Strength**

Although weaknesses appear below the surface, and corruption takes a huge toll on state capacity, the data generally indicates that Nigeria has sufficient resources to defeat Boko Haram. Nigeria's ability to rapidly and decisively drive Boko Haram out of its territory during six weeks in early 2015 demonstrated the ability of the state to defeat the insurgency if it focuses on the threat.<sup>301</sup> This also indicates that Nigeria is capable of defeating the insurgency if it wants to, disproving the strong insurgency hypothesis. Furthermore, President Buhari was elected primarily on a platform of anti-corruption and a promise to put an end to Boko Haram. Nigeria's willingness to do so is explored in the next two sections.

#### **D. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT HYPOTHESIS**

This section explores the hypothesis that the Nigerian government has intentionally allowed Boko Haram to persist so that officials and other elites can continue to profit from the conflict. First, the section explores the ways that the conflict has profited the military. Next the section looks closer at the benefits gained through an influx of foreign assistance to fight the insurgency. Finally, it examines instances of individual profit from the conflict. Based on the fairly limited amount of information currently available, this hypothesis partially explains the persistence of Boko Haram.

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<sup>299</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 34.

<sup>300</sup> Oarhe, "Responses of the Nigerian Defense and Intelligence Establishments," 69.

<sup>301</sup> Blood, "Nigeria's Critical Juncture," 1.

## **1. Economic Benefits to Military**

Traditionally among the most capable in Africa, Nigeria's military has had a historical impact in the region and has supported UN missions worldwide.<sup>302</sup> Nevertheless, being a country that has been shaped by military coups, civilian rule since 1999 has intentionally underfunded the military to prevent it from seizing power.<sup>303</sup> The army consists of roughly 90,000 troops, a number that has not significantly changed for decades.<sup>304</sup> Prior to the insurgency, the military budget fluctuated, but was generally between \$600 million and \$800 million.<sup>305</sup>

This army proved adequate to combat the insurgency in the Niger delta (which was concluding as Boko Haram was gaining momentum). Nevertheless, as previously discussed, the military budget grew roughly tenfold from 2010–2012 to well over \$6 billion, where it has remained. Such an increase was made possible by record-high oil prices during this period, and justified by the emergence of Boko Haram.<sup>306</sup> The increase was intended for equipment procurement to combat Boko Haram. After a decade of civilian rule and paltry defense budgets, military leadership recognized in Boko Haram an avenue to reestablish military might. Continued high levels defense spending was tied to the Boko Haram conflict, decreasing the incentive to defeat the insurgency.

Relatively little evidence has emerged implicating senior military leaders in graft from such a substantial military budget, but this is not surprising given the recency of events. However, since the inauguration of President Buhari there have been suggestions that certain key members of the previous government may have profited handsomely from the budget increase. Upon taking office, President Buhari dismissed all of the

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<sup>302</sup> Julum and Evans, "Exploring Networks," 1.

<sup>303</sup> *After the Election*, 17.

<sup>304</sup> "Jane's World Armies-Nigeria," IHS Inc., Last modified March 19, 2016. <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1319281>.

<sup>305</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 30; Campbell, *U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram*, 13.

<sup>306</sup> Cilliers, Schunemann and Moyer, *Power and Influence in Africa*, 19.

service chiefs and appointed more trustworthy officers to take their places.<sup>307</sup> While not an outright indictment, the action certainly calls into question the fiscal responsibility of the dismissed officers. In August 2015, President Buhari created a 13-man commission responsible for investigating cases of corruption in weapons procurement during the previous five years and, in November 2015, he ordered the arrest of the former national security advisor on charges of stealing \$2 billion in funds through fraudulent weapons procurement deals.<sup>308</sup> It is highly likely that senior military leaders have directly profited from continued conflict with Boko Haram, thus discouraging their willingness to put an end to the conflict.

## **2. Boko Haram as Justification for Increased Foreign Aid**

A substantial amount of foreign and military aid worldwide is tied to countering terrorism. Boko Haram's existence allowed the Jonathan administration to point to a violent terrorist organization within its borders as justification for increased foreign aid.<sup>309</sup> The bombing of the UN building in Abuja garnered international attention. It also demonstrated Boko Haram's reach beyond the remote northern states, legitimizing the threat to the government and international organizations operating in Nigeria.<sup>310</sup> Now as a fellow combatant in the war on terror, Nigeria formally qualified for western counter-terrorism assistance. Overall, foreign assistance has never been statistically significant due to Nigeria's massive oil wealth, nor has it been the lever for good governance that Western donors apply in other African states.<sup>311</sup> Nevertheless, the conflict with Boko Haram has helped broaden the scope of foreign assistance.

Since 2009, Nigeria has procured military equipment from over 20 different countries.<sup>312</sup> The conflict with Boko Haram also brings international attention to the

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<sup>307</sup> Muhammadu Buhari, "Nigeria Committed to Good Governance and Fighting Terror," *The Washington Post* July; 20, 2015. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/nigeria-committed-to-good-governance-and-fighting-terror/2015/07/20/8c1acd00-2e21-11e5-8353-1215475949f4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/nigeria-committed-to-good-governance-and-fighting-terror/2015/07/20/8c1acd00-2e21-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html).

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands*, 18.

<sup>310</sup> Solomon, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria," 8.

<sup>311</sup> Campbell, *U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>312</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands*, 108–111.

depressed economic condition of northern Nigeria. This has brought increased humanitarian aid from governments and NGOs to the region.<sup>313</sup> To a lesser, but not insubstantial degree, Boko Haram has caused an increase in non-military aid to Nigeria. If Boko Haram were defeated, much of this foreign military and humanitarian aid would rapidly dry-up. This increases the incentive to the government to allow Boko Haram to persist.

### **3. Relative Economic Benefits of Conflict**

It is certain that parts of the government and some individuals have economically benefitted from the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram. In spite of this, it is important to keep a perspective of scale in mind. Nigeria pumps 2.5 million barrels per day, bringing hundreds of billions of dollars into the treasury every year.<sup>314</sup> The government has a massive amount of revenue available, rendering even millions of dollars in foreign aid less significant, but not irrelevant. Audits of the state oil sector revealed that between 2002 and 2012 more than \$130 billion went missing.<sup>315</sup> Annually, an estimated 500,000 barrels of oil are illegally siphoned out of pipelines throughout the delta.<sup>316</sup> Corruption by the military leadership from a growing military budget pales in comparison.

Corrupt military officers would have easily found the means to steal money elsewhere. However, this does not negate the significance of the budgetary increases and the additional prominence this conflict has brought to the military. Boko Haram is responsible for government money being allocated to allow the Nigerian military to be great once again. A prematurely defeated Boko Haram would have threatened continued spending at this level. The economic benefits of the conflict have contributed to prolonging Boko Haram's existence. Overall, this hypothesis partially explains why an oil-rich Nigeria has allowed the insurgency to persist for seven years. The rest of the explanation can be found among the political benefits of ongoing conflict.

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<sup>313</sup> Blanchard, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions," 157.

<sup>314</sup> "Top 10 Oil Producing Countries in Africa 2015."

<sup>315</sup> Lewis and Kew, "Nigeria's Hopeful Election," 99.

<sup>316</sup> "Special Report: Nigeria." 10.

## **E. POLITICAL BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT HYPOTHESIS**

Thus, far, this chapter has examined the strong insurgency hypothesis, the under-resourced state hypothesis, and the state economic benefits hypothesis to explain a persistent insurgency. This section presents and analyzes the evidence supporting a political motivation for Boko Haram's persistence. With the evidence and analysis currently available, this hypothesis, coupled with the economic hypothesis, explain why Boko Haram has managed to persist as long as it has.

The government has intentionally allowed the insurgency to persist because of the political benefits it brought. The political risks of allowing it to persist were less than the political risks involved in combatting it. To support this hypothesis, this section begins by examining ways in which President Jonathan derived political benefit from Boko Haram's existence. Then it demonstrates the change in approach immediately prior to the 2015 election, indicating the politicization of previous decisions. In the coming years, as more facts come to light and as Boko Haram is defeated (assuming the current pressure on the insurgency continues), additional evidence may further confirm this hypothesis; however, the evidence currently available supports the idea that the Nigerian government derived more political benefit from Boko Haram's persistence than it would have from defeating it sooner.

### **1. Boko Haram as Political Scapegoat**

As previously discussed, Boko Haram was used as economic justification for budgetary increases and to solicit foreign aid. The ongoing conflict with Boko Haram was equally useful in presidential campaigns and as a political scapegoat to divert attention from other issues. During his 2011 presidential campaign, President Jonathan emphasized his leadership in the face of Boko Haram to garner political support. Boko Haram-directed threats against Jonathan, coupled with pre-election violence further enhanced Jonathan's anti-terror credibility among the electorate.<sup>317</sup> After such action aided in his 2011 election, there was little incentive to eliminate this useful enemy prior to the 2015 election when similar campaign strategies could be, and were, employed. The

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<sup>317</sup> Ewi, "Victory for Boko Haram or for Democracy?" 221.

military campaign of early 2015 was specifically timed to precede the election, allowing Jonathan to further call attention to his leadership in the face of the insurgency.<sup>318</sup> Jonathan consistently leveraged the conflict to advance his political agenda.

Boko Haram proved equally useful in diverting attention away from politically sensitive policies. In a speech in January 2012, President Jonathan directly stated that Boko Haram had infiltrated the government.<sup>319</sup> Without naming any names, his vague references to traitor members of the government alarmed many. The speech succeeded in diverting popular attention away from the abolition of fuel subsidies, an otherwise politically risky move.<sup>320</sup> Boko Haram was useful in diverting public attention and in commanding the loyalty of dissenting members of his government who did not want to be accused of being Boko Haram sympathizers.

## **2. Preserving the Boko Haram Status Quo**

Following Boko Haram’s break-out violence in 2009, President Yar’Adua ordered his security apparatus to get the nascent insurgency under control.<sup>321</sup> Within a year, the president had fallen ill, leaving Vice President Jonathan in charge. With the conflict in the north building, securing the party nomination in 2011 was no small feat. Boko Haram violence intensified, especially in protest to Jonathan’s candidature—being a southerner. Popular sentiment within the PDP favored a northern candidate instead of the acting president.<sup>322</sup> Jonathan managed to secure the party nomination while Boko Haram violence intensified. Ultimately Jonathan won the election with an overwhelming majority of votes in the southern states, but less than a third in the northern states.<sup>323</sup>

This electoral victory taught Jonathan two politically useful facts. First, he could secure electoral victory with minimal northern support. To President Jonathan, although

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<sup>318</sup> Lewis and Kew, “Nigeria’s Hopeful Election,” 102.

<sup>319</sup> Babjee Pothuraju, *Boko Haram’s Persistent Threat in Nigeria* (New Delhi: Institute for Defense Studies & Analysis, 2012).

<sup>320</sup> Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?* 7.

<sup>321</sup> Aghedo and Osumah, “Boko Haram Uprising,” 865.

<sup>322</sup> Campbell, “Nigeria’s Battle for Stability,” 33.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 34.

the conflict may have affected his popularity in the north, his political machine was successful garnering the support necessary to win despite the ongoing conflict and insecurity. The conflict may have even deterred voter turn-out, which may also have contributed to his success. Second, low levels of public outcry over violence in the north were not going to disrupt his chance at reelection. Jonathan was under no obligation to fulfill any campaign promises to bring an end to Boko Haram. He proved he could be elected while doing the minimum to contain the violence, using the group for the economic and political benefits previously outlined. When elected, and during most of his presidency, Jonathan consequently felt no obligation to put forth the necessary effort to end the insurgency and allowed it to persist.

Similarly, this experience encouraged Jonathan to preserve the status quo. He proved he could be elected in spite of northern opposition and Boko Haram violence. Significant military action against an insurgency that did not harm him politically would be an unnecessary risk. He could potentially lose favor with his military by sending them into large-scale battle. He could lose favor with the electorate if the military campaign went poorly. Instead Jonathan adopted the most prudent measure and ordered a minimum of military action to partially check the insurgency without risking the force necessary to bring it to an end. The status quo was preserved. Nigeria was fully economically and militarily capable of acting to end the insurgency sooner. It was the political decision by the Jonathan administration that permitted Boko Haram to endure.

### **3. Conflict as Politics**

Since Boko Haram began its violent attacks on police stations in the mid-2000s to the 2015 presidential election, Nigeria's leaders have used the conflict as a political tool. President Jonathan used the conflict for his political gain and acted to preserve the status quo. He neglected the conflict and failed to deal with it in a decisive manner, while deriving political benefit from its persistence. He felt little pressure to resolve an ongoing conflict that was taking place in what he viewed as a less politically significant region and that did not pose a threat to the capital or his primary constituency. Risking military

action in the north would have been politically irresponsible and carry more risks than benefits.

President Jonathan made a political decision to not combat Boko Haram until the waning months of his presidency. This inaction allowed Boko Haram to persist and grow to the point that it took and held territory and killed thousands. Only when the status quo changed and he was no longer politically benefitting from the conflict did Jonathan authorize decisive action. The effectiveness of the 2015 military campaign demonstrated that Nigeria had the ability to defeat Boko Haram all along but it had not used it.

## F. CONCLUSION

This chapter has closely examined Nigeria and the 12-year conflict with Boko Haram and sought to explain its persistence. Considering Nigeria's size—geographically, but also with respect to its military, economy, population, and natural resource endowment—the country had the capability to directly confront and defeat Boko Haram. To explain this phenomenon, the chapter has tested four hypotheses to determine the likely cause. Although relatively strong in the north, Boko Haram has never been sufficiently strong to pose a threat to the central government. Similarly, Nigeria has sufficient resources to deal with such a regional threat. The reason for the insurgency's persistence can be found in Nigeria's intentional political and economic decisions.

The benefits of a war economy served to enrich elites within the government. The conflict has served to significantly grow the military budget, creating incentive for the military hierarchy to prolong the conflict as long as possible. The conflict has also presented significant opportunity for certain corrupt individuals to handsomely profit. Furthermore, the conflict has facilitated substantial inflows of foreign assistance. Although, this funding pales in comparison to Nigeria's oil revenue, it has proven highly significant to the return of the Nigerian military to prominence in the government. The economic benefits of the conflict have disincentivized the military from taking decisive action to eliminate Boko Haram.

The conflict was also a political tool government leaders employed to gain, consolidate, and manipulate power. The irresolute actions of Nigeria's president during

the height of the insurgency indicate that more action could have been taken to stop Boko Haram much sooner. Instead, a southern president appears to have neglected the northern region to preserve his electoral advantage as he perceived it. Ultimately the political atmosphere changed forcing a change in tactics that demonstrated the politicization of Boko Haram's persistence.

In all four hypotheses, the most significant evidence to refute or support was Nigeria's successful and resolute six-week campaign to reestablish security in much of the north. While Boko Haram is not yet defeated, this highly significant event demonstrated the weakness of Boko Haram, and the strength of the Nigerian state. It further demonstrated that the military was fully capable of countering Boko Haram when ordered to. Finally, it highlighted the years during which the Nigerian government could have dealt with Boko Haram, yet did not. It was only when an incumbent's reelection bid was threatened that the order was given to put down the insurgency.

A critique of this conclusion may suggest two significant facts that could detract from the previous analysis. First, it might be suggested that Nigeria employed a sizeable force of mercenaries in its six-week push against Boko Haram and that these forces, and not the Nigerian troops, were more responsible for Boko Haram's roll back.<sup>324</sup> However, Nigeria could have employed such troops several years sooner had it desired to. The price of oil was over \$100 per barrel for several years before the 2015 campaign; resources were available had the government decided to use them. The second critique is along the same lines; namely that Nigeria may have required several years of consistently high military budgets to compensate for a decade of neglect under the Obasanjo administration.<sup>325</sup> This might be true. However, the combined multi-national and mercenary forces did drive out Boko Haram in a mere six weeks. This indicates that Boko Haram was much weaker than suspected. A weaker government force may have taken more time, but would still likely have defeated Boko Haram. Either way, a more thorough analysis of Nigeria's military strength from 2008–2014 would likely strengthen these conclusions.

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<sup>324</sup> McGregor, "Conflict at a Crossroads," 8.

<sup>325</sup> International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 30.

The campaign against Boko Haram remains ongoing under the leadership of President Buhari. But during the first year of his presidency, it appears that the military and police are maintaining pressure on the insurgency and degrading its ability to operate.<sup>326</sup> Certainly as more time goes by, additional evidence will emerge, further illuminating the analysis of Nigeria's actions against Boko Haram. Until then, the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Nigeria's political and military leaders allowed Boko Haram to persist for economic and political reasons.

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<sup>326</sup> “Nigeria: Boko Haram Is Not ‘Defeated’ but Buhari’s Strategy Is Working,” [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com/stories/201601051226.html), Last modified January 5, 2016. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201601051226.html>.

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## IV. CONCLUSION

At the outset, this research sought to explain why otherwise strong African nations might allow an insurgency to persist within their borders. On the surface, such action would be irrational for a government seeking to consolidate rule and extend governance, along a Weberian definition of statehood. Despite this seeming irrationality, an underlying logic exists in an African context to allow such conflict to continue if it remains isolated from the center of power and if it can be leveraged to political or economic gain. Using the cases of Uganda and Nigeria as the focus of study, this thesis has demonstrated that such a phenomenon is prevalent in African internal conflicts. A careful analysis of these cases might help highlight similar practice in other instances.

Thurs far, these two case studies present strikingly similar examples of a sitting government allowing an insurgency to persist for political and economic reasons. Being the more historical of the two cases, the case against Uganda is more explicit. Over time, more evidence has surfaced directly linking governmental decisions to political and economic justifications for the conflict to continue. In Nigeria, the evidence of corruption during the previous administration is already becoming public record; President Buhari has taken a strong position in prosecuting culpable individuals. If President Buhari is successful in vanquishing or substantially degrading Boko Haram in the coming years, more evidence will likely emerge allowing further research into this area.

In both case studies, the evidence strongly indicates that the sitting governments permitted an insurgency to persist for economic and political reasons. Each of these categories presented the government with the opportunity to enhance its power while exerting a minimum of effort to combat the insurgency. By simply permitting the insurgency's continued existence, the government benefitted.

With the substantial but limited amount of U.S. foreign and military aid available to African nations, it behooves policy makers to make sound decisions in supporting regimes dedicated to ending conflicts, not perpetuating them. To that end, this chapter highlights some of the dynamics at play in each case study and demonstrates the ways

such dynamics may inform on the decisions of policy makers. Such dynamics may highlight areas of concern in future conflict, demonstrating other cases where a government may not be fully committed to defeating an insurgency within its borders.

#### **A. ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT**

Both case studies demonstrate insurgencies that were prolonged to the continued economic benefit of the central government and to individuals. In both cases, insurgencies brought international attention to the plight of the government. This facilitated flows of foreign aid, humanitarian assistance, military support, and budgetary aid. Of course Uganda and Nigeria were not the only African recipients of foreign aid, so it is safe to assume that these countries would have received some aid even without ongoing internal conflicts. Nevertheless, policy makers should strongly consider the impact that such aid will have on the intensity and duration of an internal conflict. If some of the money is tied to an ongoing conflict or to combatting an insurgency, that money might indirectly contribute to its persistence.

In like manner, the elite and military officials fiscally benefitted from the ongoing conflict. In both Nigeria and Uganda the military budget was vastly inflated because of the ongoing conflict. In the case of Nigeria, a decade of neglect left the military a shell of its former self. The Boko Haram conflict brought money and prestige to the previously neglected force. They had every reason to expect that the government would roll back this budget increase alongside Boko Haram's defeat. Uganda's military was similarly in a state of degradation at the time of the LRA's emergence, although more attributable to nearly a decade of conflict rather than intentional neglect. At a time when the Ugandan economy was reforming, the conflict with the LRA justified increased military spending that would likely have been otherwise spent on other post-conflict reconstruction measures. In both cases, the military shared a motivation to prolong the conflict to justify continued military spending.

While the military establishments in both countries benefitted from the respective conflicts, military officers also found unique ways to maximize profit from ongoing conflict in their respective countries. These trends are almost certainly more difficult to

track or uncover while the conflict is ongoing. Individual profiteering might be predicted, however, in countries where corruption is prevalent. Ongoing conflict generally does not decrease corruption, especially among the military officers most concerned with it. When assessing motivations for conflict in other countries, researchers should consider the state of the military prior to conflict and the impact the conflict has on the military budget. This consideration might help predict cases where the military is acting to prolong the conflict.

The effects of a war-time economy are well documented and profiteering from conflict is inevitable. Nevertheless it is important for policy makers to consider the nature of insurgent conflict in African countries and what economic motivations they have to continue the conflict or bring it to an end. These considerations should affect the scale and manner in which the U.S. government renders assistance. Generally such economic assessments will be closely tied to political analysis of such conflicts; and these case studies demonstrate that often economic and political conditions for continued conflict complement one another.

## **B. POLITICAL BENEFITS OF CONTINUED CONFLICT**

These case studies similarly demonstrate numerous ways in which African governments derive political gain from ongoing insurgent conflict. Naturally this discourages leaders from concluding politically beneficial insurrections. Nigeria and Uganda have both demonstrated situations where sitting governments derived political gain from an insurgency that did not directly threaten the center of power. Both case studies had substantial overlap in the manner in which the insurgency politically benefitted the center.

Regional and ethnic marginalization played a significant role in both case studies; and interestingly, both involved northern insurgent groups terrorizing a marginalized northern people. The dynamics between affected ethnic groups is also significant in both cases. The central government in both Nigeria and Uganda maintained a somewhat adversarial relationship with the ethnic group that gave birth to the respective insurrections. Also, both the LRA and Boko Haram turned against their own people. In

this manner, the insurgencies were helping the central government in repressing a hostile regional or ethnic group. These dynamics clearly matter when trying to unravel the complexities of insurgent conflict. And when an irrelevant or adversarial ethnic group is most directly affected by an insurgent group, the conflict will likely persist much longer than if the center or a politically connected group is targeted.

These case studies similarly highlight the manner in which a leader can gain political capital due to an ongoing conflict. In Uganda, the conflict allowed the president to grant additional resources to the military, ensuring their continued support and loyalty. President Jonathan, in Nigeria, likely expected similar military support after increasing its budget and prominence among government institutions. The conflict also permitted each government to deploy thousands of federal troops to the affected areas, further suppressing restless populations. These leaders also saw increased support among their core constituencies for maintaining a fight against adversarial regions or ethnic groups. Military deployments served this political purpose as well.

As democratic elections in both countries neared, the leader was cast as the only individual strong enough to continue to fight the nefarious northerners. In Uganda, opposition candidates were even cast as sympathetic to the insurgency. Both Jonathan and Museveni used the conflict to gain favorable votes, and suppress the ability of opponents to vote against them. Both were elected or reelection while insurgencies were raging. Both similarly saw benefit in preserving the status-quo through the following election. President Jonathan blatantly attempted to gain votes by launching the first substantial military operation against Boko Haram on the eve of the election. If beneficial in one election, it would likely prove helpful during the next cycle, discouraging politically risky security campaigns to degrade or destroy the insurgency. In this manner, the insurgency is a political partner—as long as it does not threaten the center, it should help the incumbent at reelection time.

These political dynamics may be more difficult to identify in ongoing conflicts. Observers and policy makers should consider the relations between ethnic groups, regional interactions, party constituencies, and the impact of the conflict on political campaigns. This information may help identify other instances where an internal conflict

might be exploited for political gain. Providing substantial foreign aid or support in such circumstances would further prolong the conflict, increasing the suffering of those populations most affected by the insurgent operations.

### C. KEY TAKEAWAYS

Overall, these two case studies demonstrate the role that an insurgency can play in the complex dynamics of power in African states. As emerging democracies, an insurgency is seen less as a challenge to the state and its constitution (as it would in a liberal democracy), and more as a challenge to personal rule. How a government responds to that challenge depends greatly on the dynamics at play. The goal of a liberal democracy would be to eliminate the threat. In an emerging democracy in Africa, the insurgency is viewed as another aspect of a complex web of intersecting power dynamics that needs to be balanced to ensure continued individual or party rule. The insurgency may be allowed to persist where it is politically and economically beneficial to the center for it to do so. Policy makers must understand that the goal of an African partner nation might not be to directly confront and eliminate the threat. Analysts need to take an extremely careful and nuanced view of the ethnic dynamics, history, resources, economics, political situation, etc., when advising on policy objectives. Policy makers need to carefully weigh such analysis when choosing to support a government in its internal conflict, and understand that the objectives of the partner nation might drastically differ from those of the supportive government.

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